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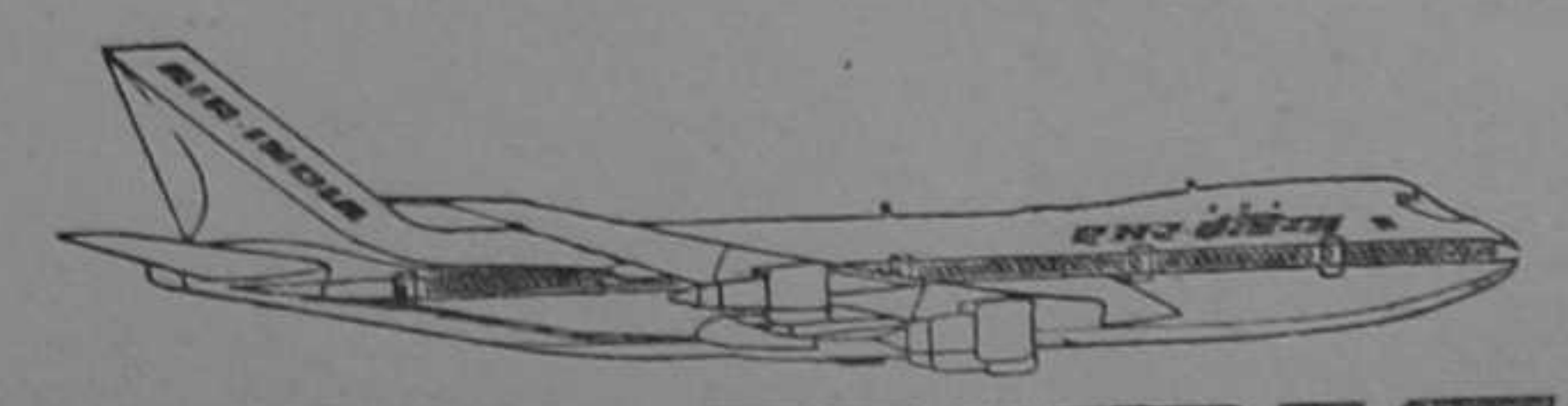
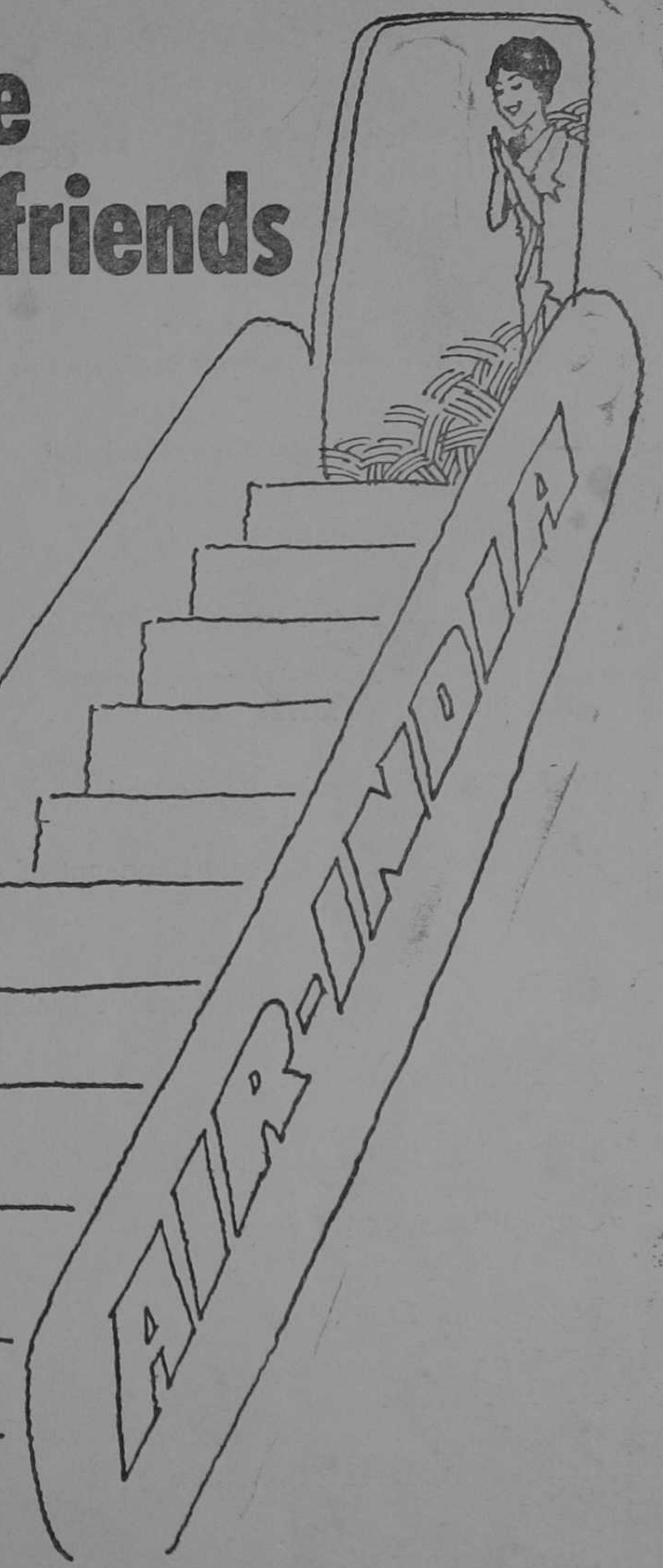
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CONTENTS

Carnatic Music — Challenge & Response By Prof. R. K. Ramanathan	5
Anantharama Bhagavathar — Stalwart By " Saragrahi "	14
Anecdotes of Carnatic Musicians	....	17
The Bharatha Natya Scene Today	.... By " KINNARI "	21
Ariakudi, The Colossus	.... Prof. T. V. Ramanujam	31
Prof. T. V. Ramanujam Honoured	....	36
Mylapore Gowri — A Great Exponent of Abhinaya	.... By N. R. Bhuvanarhan	37
Gowri Amma — A Great Dancer & Teacher	.... By Nirmala Ramachandran	41
Book Reviews	....	43
The Madras Cultural Scenario	....	49
Cultural Scene in Bombay	....	50
Letter from Ernakulam	52
News & Notes	..	53
Cultural Scene in Karnataka	55
Letter to the Editor	..	57

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Carnatic Music - Challenge and Response

By

Prof. R. K. RAMANATHAN

If you make a jolly row, you get the applause—George Bernard Shaw.

Fifty years ago, there would have been no need for an article of this nature since traditional Carnatic Music enjoyed the unstinted patronage of music lovers who were motivated by pure classical tastes. They came and sat in an almost deferential mood providing the necessary fillip of attentive and appreciative listening. This could not fail to put the singer on his mettle and to induce him to give the best he was capable of. There are instances of people walking several miles or performing long journeys in other ways in order to get to the venue of a concert.

Musical Experience to Cherish

Admittedly, they were amply rewarded for their pains by a substantial musical experience which they could mull over for a long time to come. The normal duration of a concert which was anywhere between four to five hours was, by all accounts, passed in a mood of total rapport and never felt to be long. In fact, those were leisurely times and so the nagging sense of time simply was not there to tease the listener's mind. He could throw himself heart and soul into the experience oblivious of the external world. In addition to the actual concert time, there were the hours of wait which preceded it. Sometimes, this would be the most trying part of it, considering how densely packed the concert hall would be well in advance. Even under such conditions, certain privileged listeners would arrive late and squeeze

themselves into their ring-side seat, of course, amid the angry mutterings of those who had already secured not-so-comfortable seats. Nor was there, in all this, any consideration of commerce. It was purely art for art's sake.

The Factors for Success

Reflecting on the success of such concerts, one is forced to attribute it to certain salient factors. To begin with, the audiences were small and compact and so were the halls. As already indicated, there was an atmosphere of intimacy between the listener and the musician. There were no artificial aids to listening—such as the mike. Time had to wait by till one had had one's fill of musical experience. The artiste had plenty of time to warm up to his job and even to rise to heights, taking the listeners along with him. The intensity of audience participation and artistic creation acted as mutual catalysts, resulting in an aesthetic experience of a high order.

To-day, there is a total transformation of the whole scenario. We have come to live in an Age of Mass Media, which have gained considerably in strength, as a result of the electronic revolution. The recent explosion in media technology is, at once, an unmitigated curse and an invaluable blessing. Secondly, we have become wedded to the democratic principle of equality. So-much-so that in the name of egalitarianism we have come to lump together the genuine

and the spurious. Let us consider the repercussions these changes have had on our music to-day.

Mass Media-Polyglot music

So far as the Mass Media are concerned, it is possible to single out the following factors as having had a powerful impact on classical music.

First and foremost, the Radio: in my estimation, it has done more harm than good. It has cut music down to size, has tailored it and thus robbed it of spontaneity and depth. It has become a convenient dumping ground for music of all kinds—good, bad and indifferent—which it pumps out in an endless stream on an unsuspecting public. Taps may go dry but you will never miss your radio unless you choose not to tune in. Undoubtedly a potent means of musical education, it has failed miserably in effecting this because of its misguided policies.

By putting on the air an amateur and an expert cheek by jowl, it simply confounds the average listener and renders him incapable of forming a correct judgement or a healthy classical taste. Exposure to all types and kinds of music is the surest way of nipping in the bud the just developing taste. It might be argued in defence that the listener in question might switch off his receiver when he is afraid of something he does not want. But who is to tell him that? Assuming that he is a freelance listener with a penchant for good classical stuff, if he is subjected to a barrage of 'polyglot' music, he will only end up as the most miserable specimen of an uncritical though ardent music-lover. In fact, today we have a vast mass of such listeners who throng the concert halls. So long as they cannot distinguish chalk

from cheese, our musical heritage is in danger of being lost.

We have heard of Film Appreciation courses but we haven't heard of Music Appreciation Courses. Is it not high time that such courses were opened to intending aspirants?

The Psychological Game

Unfortunately, the fate of our musicians is very much in the hands of half-baked listeners. It is a well-known truth that the popular rating of an artiste is an important criterion for his success in the profession. The larger the following, the greater the demand. So, if you can see your way to please this dubious class of listeners, you are assured of success. With a little psychological insight, you can learn to play down to the gallery, as it were. We have several examples in our own day of musicians who have succeeded in playing this psychological game and reaped resounding success. But to that extent they have *abdicated their primary responsibility to maintain strict classical standards.*

At any rate, one of them has been—would you believe it?—unabashedly speaking in defence of, what might be called, a pseudo-classical style on the ground that people want him to dish out that kind of stuff and so he has been doing just that. Incidentally, there is no doubt, that he is a big box-office draw. That apart, a strong case is made out by him for a watered-down version of classical music which has a wider appeal. The same artist claims to possess the capability to cater to the most rigorous classical tastes too, and yet, since the majority of his fans have opted for the former, he has stuck to it. The first part of his declaration may very well be conceded but the second is palpable nonsense. Even the most casual observer,

of his style can detect big chinks in his supposed classical armour. The only credit due to him is that from the moment he starts playing right up to the moment he calls it off, both the hands are busily engaged in producing the maximum commotion, true vitality being nowhere visible on the horizon. For good measure, the percussion ensemble batters away with equal zest, compounding the musical offence but, to one's dismay, bringing down the house. One remembers Bernard Shaw's quip 'If you make a jolly row, you get the applause'.

Assault on the Ear

Another policy, no longer questionable, is the enthronement of light and film music. What I mean is, these varieties of music have been elevated to a respectable position and given a large chunk of broadcasting time. They have a vast clientele of listeners up and down the country. They penetrate to the remotest corners. They are avidly listened to by the rich and the poor alike. Indeed, if we are looking for the Greatest Common Musical Factor, it is this. The other day, I saw a group of stone-cutters engaged in work while a transistor was blaring away film music. Many households start ticking only when there is a background of radio music of the non-descript variety. We are all too familiar with this in restaurants. You are never left in peace to eat or talk. A radio set preferably in a state of bad repair, should be there to assault your ears with a mixture of bad music and atmospherics. Even on public roads you are not safe from this kind of aural pollution. Loudspeakers rend the air with a constant cannonade of sound. You are bludgeoned into insensibility. There is no escape from it. Willy nilly, you are a victim of, what might be called, "Electronic Barbarism".

Corrosive influence

This ubiquitous presence corrodes the musical taste of the public. Nine out of ten are persuaded that that is how music should be. There apparently you have music for the millions. And how rapidly are the songs picked up by avid fans and sung in season and out of season! In my opinion, this is the most pernicious influence that has ever challenged classical music. It is a sort of democratic art - art for all. It is in keeping with the egalitarian spirit of the times. It 'attacks the established order by trying to eliminate the scarcity of art', by trying to dispel the notion that 'art is high status activity'. Speaking for myself, I must confess that though I am a confirmed democrat in politics, I am an elitist in art.

Analysis

The reasons for the instant popularity of this kind of music are not far to seek. Evidently it makes no demands either on systematic musical training or on the knowledge of melodic craft. It has a free form and a smooth movement. The inevitable romantic theme goes to the heart, so far as the younger generation is concerned. It is 'effortlessly consumed' by the young and the old. Its musical content is tailor made for mass cultivation and it becomes a ready fodder for the mass media. *There is a pervasive effeminacy in tonal texture, a cloying sweetness trying to translate phony emotions into musical terms. It could be aptly described as the opium of the masses.* Admittedly, the singular lack of melodic strength makes it eminently fit for mass consumption. Often, language is no barrier for the contagion to catch on. It is the music that enthrals.

Psychic Subversion of Taste

Consider the number of Hindi film songs that are picked up by young boys and

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girls of the Southern States, whose mother-tongue is either Tamil or Kanarese. In recent times, all the regional languages have established their own respective film worlds and the so-called hit-tunes are freely copied and dubbed in other languages. They are circulated by means of mass produced records and tapes. Thus, the sort of publicity they ultimately achieve becomes a statistical marvel. The ambit is so wide as to encompass the whole of society, from the highest strata to the grass-roots. Indeed, film music and its offshoots—Sugam Sangeeth and Bhav Geeths—have gained enough social acceptance to merit categorization as a new musical sub-culture. The point, however, is that the public that is fed on musical fare of this nature eventually comes to have its musical taste debauched and in some cases even numbed out of existence. The nett result is, to put it bluntly, a kind of psychic subversion of classical taste.

I regard film music, then, as a powerful agent in the erosion of classical taste. Of late, certain artistes have tried to carve out a niche for themselves in both the spheres. This dual role has undoubtedly boosted their popularity. But, they have not proved to be shining citadels of classical orthodoxy. From the purist's point of view, their music is neither strictly classical nor wholly unclassical. It is a doubtful genre whose impact on traditional music is not altogether wholesome.

Film Tie - ups

How come, then, that they are listened to in a state of hypnotic receptivity by packed houses? Perhaps, because the charismatic halo they carry about them, which of course is the direct outcome of tie-ups with films, makes them sure crowd-pullers. Every concert is a practical proof

of what psychologists call the herd instinct. More is the pity when some eccentric professional critics put the seal of approval on it by their unstinting admiration. It is welcomed as the New Wave Music, positively *avant garde*. I can never laugh off the unease I feel at all this. It is the greatest challenge to mainstream music. Its popularity is simply due to the fact that it trades in all those cheap effects which are taboo in strict classical music. But, since the majority of the starry-eyed camp followers sanctify it with the name of 'serious music', others, even the significant others, have to keep their mouths shut.

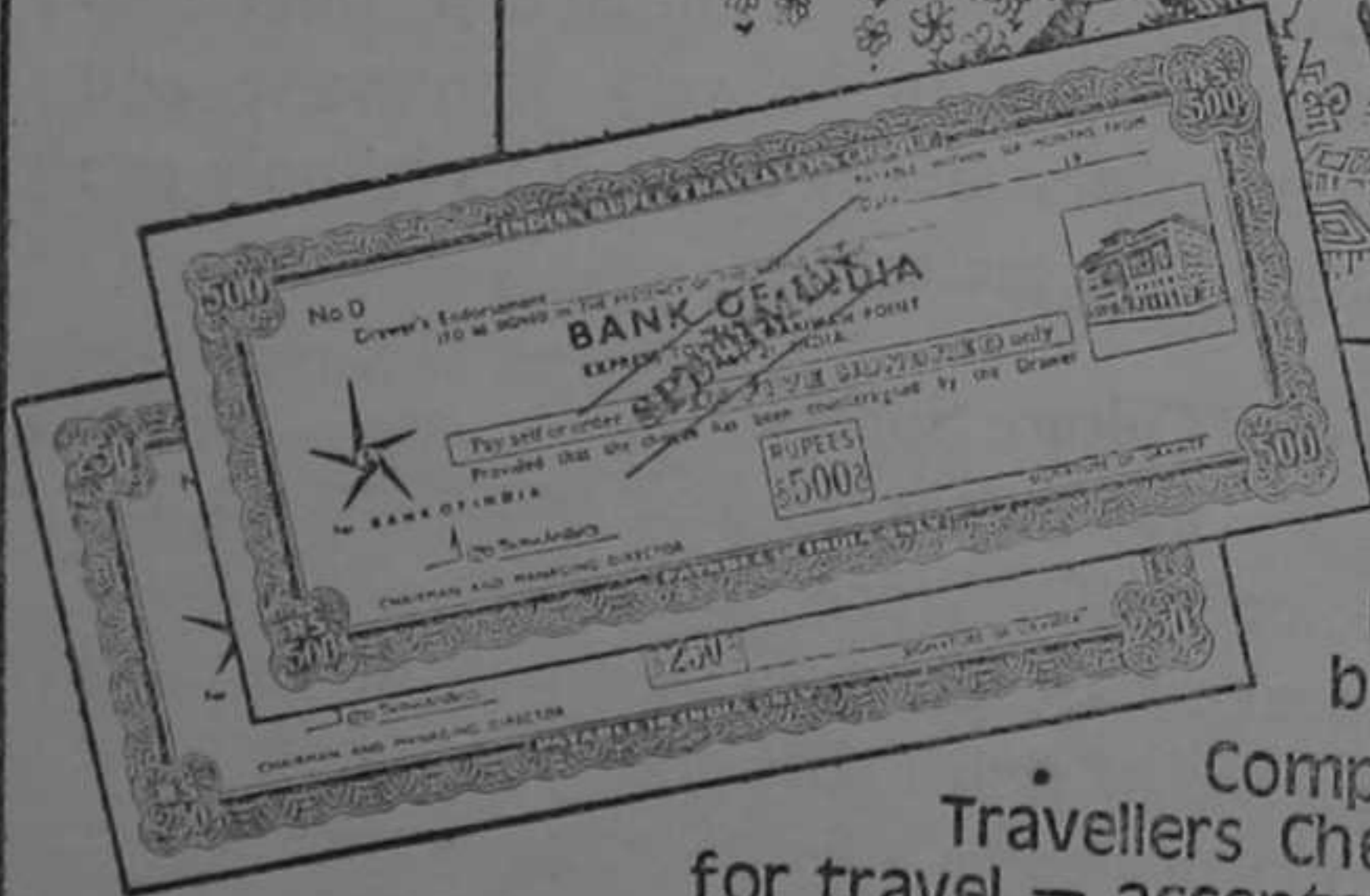
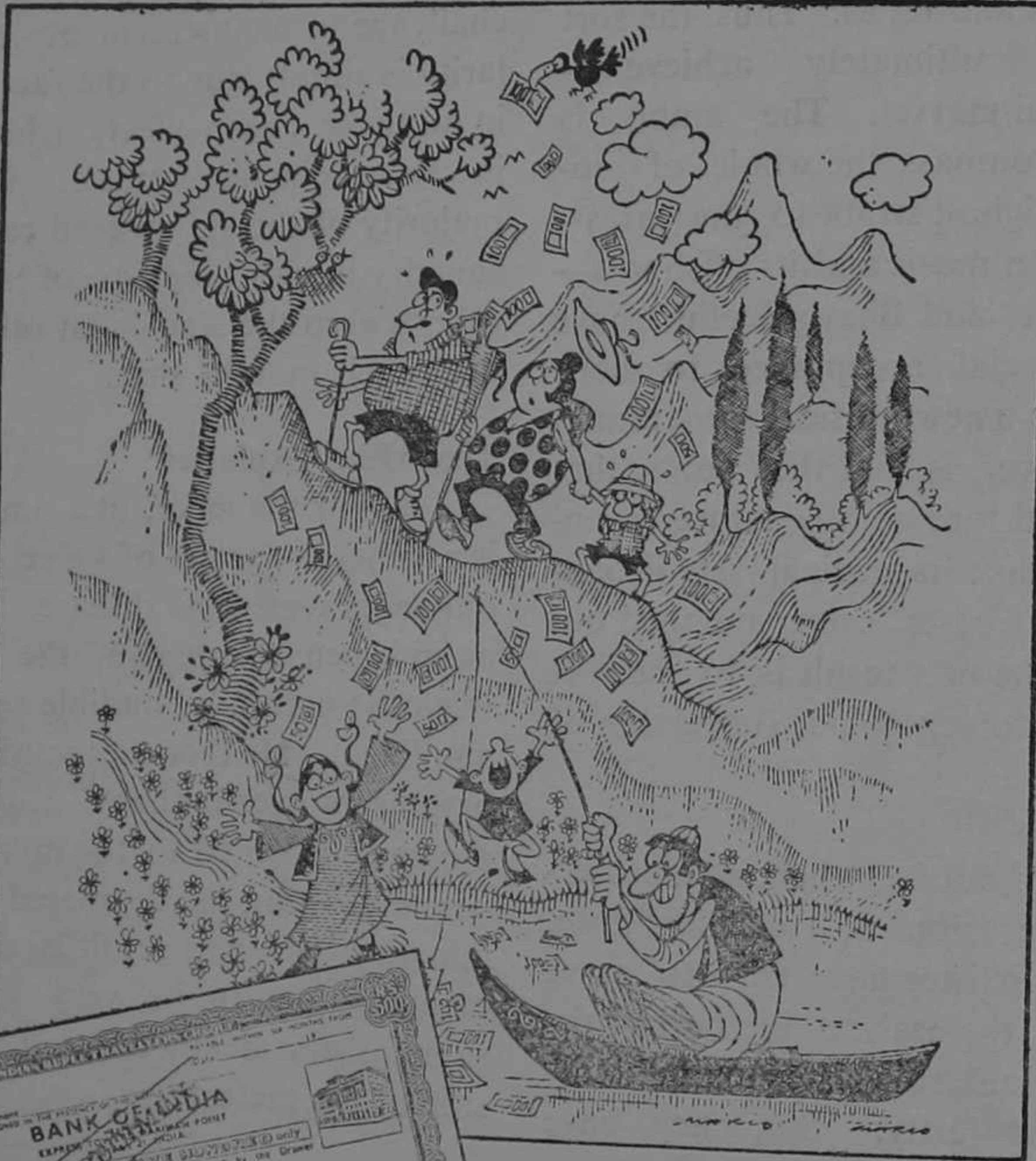
The Mike Exploited

As for the mike, at a time when there is a general neglect of voice culture, it has only aggravated the disease. It has become an indispensable part of the concert scene. Even the naturally audible voices must be amplified. Neither the musicians nor the organisers ever bother to consider whether the voice is suited to the mike or not. The whole question is dismissed in a cavalier manner. The nett result is that some concerts turn out to be very impressive and some others ideally dull. This is only one side of the picture.

Voice Culture Suffers

The other is the insidious effect on the voice itself. When you know that loudspeakers are going to be installed, you feel a sense of relief because, you know that you can sing in a lighthearted way and yet produce a false impression of singing with maximum effect. After a few such concerts, you fall into the rut, as it were, and never bother about the distortions produced by increasing the sound output of your voice, since the mike is there to do it. No wonder that the consequent vocal debilitation begins to tell on the quality of music also.

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Curiously enough,, a leading music critic has been heard to heap praises on a certain artiste for his expertise in making the maximum use of the mike. What he means is that the artiste in question sings all the time into the mike without permitting even a single note to escape amplification. Isn't it a great thing to do? Surely, here is an example to be emulated. Note the paradoxical situation in which we have landed ourselves. The mike, which should be allowed to play only a subsidiary role in concerts, has turned out to be a prime necessity and has ostensibly induced the development of 'new skills'. which are duly recognised as paramount virtues. And the worst part of it is that voices come to be judged, not by what they are but by what they become when transmuted by the mike.

Too Loud

Again, there are some artistes who insist on a feedback effect in the sound system. Obviously, they are not content with moderate amplification. Rather, would they prefer to have a boomerang effect calculated to stun the listeners with an overload of sound.

The plight of some of the Vainikas, in this respect, is most deplorable. In addition to contact mike, they want maximum amplification. Under these conditions, the plucked string produces a thunderous twang which raps the poor listener's tympanum with tremendous force. The mellow tone of the instrument has become a forgotten thing.

Vulgarisation

Modern gadgets, like the Tape-recorder, have been responsible, in no small way, for the absolute vulgarisation of music in general. Classical music is robbed of its mystique by being

subjected to 'canning'. With the help of science, we are industrialising everything, and what is worse, dehumanising or, shall we say, depersonalising everything.

These are some of the extraneous causes which have adversely affected the sanctity, serenity and purity of classical music. Simultaneously the same causes have hindered the promotion of a healthy musical taste. Now, let us turn our attention to a consideration of some internal causes which have brought down standards on the one hand and which, on the other hand, have discouraged the average listener from taking kindly to classical music.

Music Sans Sruthi

As a rule, we need to develop a better 'Sruti' sense. 'Sruti' is the life and soul of a melodic system. Our Northern neighbours have made it the ultimate value and what is more creditable, have put it into practice. Absolute fidelity to 'Sruti' is seen in every note of every phrase, whether it be in slow, middle or fast tempo or in the lower, middle or upper register. It is the result of intense concentration on that value right from the start. We have neither the good sense nor the patience to practise in extreme slow tempo which gives strength and tautness to the voice, in addition to making it adhere to sruti with precision.

The Tempo Bait

A headlong rush into the middle tempo is the besetting evil of Carnatic Music as if anything else would be boring. We are satisfied with an approximate 'Sruti' value, hoping that there will be progressive improvement as the artiste gets into his stride. In nine out of ten cases, this hope is belied. The crux of the matter is that we tend to devote much less time and energy than is necessary to perfect the

basics, are in a mortal hurry to attain performing competence. That is why there is a lot of callow material in the field to-day.

Manipulation

Moreover, a clever manipulation of the power structure in the music world pushes even second or third-rate merit to the forefront—which means, that room at the top is mostly for the clever ones. When artificially boosted merit comes to hold the field, the effect is bound to be surreptitiously suicidal. True vitality alone can be self-sustaining, everything else is doomed to oblivion. To sum up, then, in order to rejuvenate Carnatic music, there must be a general awakening of the 'Sruti' sense on the part of the artistes and a concentration of purpose to maintain it throughout.

The Percussionists

Secondly, a good many of our percussionists, with due respect to their ingenuity, must learn to subdue their sound output and to curb their tendency to run after riotous rhythmic improvisations. More often than not, they try to dominate the vocalist and draw all the attention to themselves. By introducing all manner of cross-rhythms with unbridled freedom, they make awful hash of the music as such. They forget that the instrument they handle has a sound potential greater than the vocal and instrumental sound put together. Therefore, they are expected to handle it with extreme caution. To put it in a nutshell, 'restraint' is what they need to cultivate if they have any pretensions at all to team work and to make the concert enjoyable. Many a lay listener is scared away by such an unseasonable display of virtuosity and, by a percussionist at that. Here again, we have to learn a lot from North Indian musicians.

Swaraprasthara

Thirdly, our 'Swara Prasthara' has definitely lapsed into a dry-as-dust, cerebral exercise altogether bereft of 'Sruti' and 'Bhava'. The climax of this exercise is a veritable medley of noises to which the listener has to shut the best part of both the ears. It is about as touching as a brass band. Elegance falls an early casualty. When it ("the tumult and the shouting") is all over the performers never betray even by the batting of an eyelid the devastation wreaked on our sensibilities. It is sad to note that the indulgence in this kind of exercise has become almost pathological. Believe it or not, an artiste who excels in it is rated high, not because he wrings the heart but because he tickles the brain. Unless this tendency is checked, we dare not expect Carnatic Music to have a bright future.

As for the 'Solo' turn of the percussionist, in most cases, its significance has become more ritualistic than practical. We are hamstrung by some of these rigid conventions.

The foregoing may appear to some as an unduly harsh indictment of present-day music. But, unfortunately, that is the only way to bounce us out of our complacency. It reminds me of what John Stuart Mill said in another context. Referring to the loss of respect for a sane individual in a mass culture, he said 'Any voice not pitched in an exaggerated key is lost in the hubbub'. Viewed from this angle, the indictment is not altogether uncharitable.

Suggestions

I would like to offer a few suggestions to all those concerned for the better preservation of our precious musical heritage.

There is nothing that we can do to change the policies of All India Radio authorities. But a few suggestions may be given for what they are worth. First of all, broadcasting time, in the case of music, needs to be drastically cut down to encourage sensible listening. Selection of artistes should be done strictly on the basis of sound guidelines. This is, indeed, a thorny problem, since we are deeply enmeshed in complicated interplay of quasi-political forces pulling in all directions. The cash nexus is responsible for most of the mischief.

Added to that is the publicity value that broadcasting gives to an artiste. Budding talent is all too soon elevated to a position of equality with experienced merit. Conversely, we do come across some junk in the latter category also but no one dare disturb it from its entrenched position for fear of violent reactions. Thirdly, no programme should be allowed to go on the air unless it is rigorously rehearsed. This is rarely done. From the word 'go' the artiste is expected to attain the best of form which is unthinkable, especially by Carnatic standards.

As for the mike, let us admit that it is a necessary evil. The only way to mitigate the evil is to exercise moderation in its use. It is, in this context, that we should remember with gratitude the salutary role played by Chamber Music Sabhas.

Sruthi All Important

Our artistes will do well to pay more attention to methods of good voice produc-

tion, together with an increased accent on 'Sruti'. At present, in our concerts, we are only being drip-fed with sound that is musically relevant. We should start performing against a generous background of drones. Our percussionists should learn to play in a more subdued key and with greater emphasis on highlighting the sound aspect of the instrument rather than on displaying ingenuity of stroke.

Perfection of melody

In other words, our artistes—vocalists as well as instrumentalists—need to concentrate on how to maximise sound output instead of trying to pack, every minute of concert time, with improvisations. Mere intellection seems to predominate over melodic expansion. This tendency needs to be curbed, making it possible for the vocalist to direct his energies towards perfecting the melodic effect. He must cultivate the capacity to lose himself quite in the plenitude of Nada, as if his whole being had resolved itself into sound. Such moments are rarely met with in present-day Carnatic concerts. There is too much restless movement, too little repose. The singer's attention is outward bound; most of the time, the singing itself being done in a mechanical way. If we could be pulled out of this rut, our music would be making a better impact on the world.

Fortunately, we have amidst us a handful of artistes who are singularly free from the shortcomings hitherto discussed. They are our only hope for the survival of our glorious Carnatic tradition.

Anantharama Bhagavathar—Stalwart

By

SARAGRAHI, Bangalore.

Among the many stalwart musicians of the latter half of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century, Palghat Anantharama Bhagavathar was a unique personality. Tall, fair-complexioned and with a fiery moustache, he left an indelible impression on all those who saw and heard him. His senior contemporaries were Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer, Pallavi Seshayyar, Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar. Tiruvotriyur Tyagayya, Veena Seshanna, Dhanammal and Bidaram Krishnapa, to name only a few.

Anantharama Bhagavathar's life is the success story of an exceptional musician backed by perseverance and grit. Born in 1866 in Thondikulam Agraharam in Palghat town, as the second son of Krishna Sastrigal, a great Sanskrit scholar, young Anantharaman took to music as a moppet. He was not content with the training he got in his native place and spurred by an insatiable ambition he went to Trivandrum. Here he was lucky to come under the tutelage of Nurani Mahadeva Bhagavathar, the son of Nurani Parameswara Bhagavathar, the Asthana Vidwan.

Voice Culture

Anantharaman resorted to unusual methods to strengthen his voice. He would often go to the seashore at daybreak and practise singing amidst the roar of the waves. This gave his voice a pitch and volume which later became the envy of his

contemporaries. After his training in Trivandrum, he went to Tiruvayyar in Tanjore district, with the hope of becoming the disciple of the redoubtable Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer. But then he learnt that the latter was not disposed to train disciples. He was disappointed but not disheartened. With the help of a close relative of his, to wit, Sir K. Seshadri Iyer, then Dewan of Mysore, he continued to stay in Tiruvayyar in the ostensible role of a "Mantrika from Malabar". In this capacity he was able to make friends with Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer and attend all his concerts.

An Ekalavya

He became an "Ekalavya" of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer and developed an impeccable lakshya and lakshana gnyana. When he was about 27 Anantharaman decided to keep abreast of the latest developments in Carnatic music and went to Madras city. There he was able to follow in the footsteps of another giant of that era, Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer.

Harikatha

His ambition took an unexpected turn when he met Pandit Lakshmanachar, then considered to be the guru of many Harikatha performers and musicians. Anantharaman spent some years under his tutelage as his supporting singer and became Anantharama "Bhagavathar." His knowledge of

Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam helped him in the highly demanding art of Harikatha. Thus his vocal brilliance got a new dimension.

Fame Spreads

By his 30th year Bhagavathar's name and fame spread throughout South India. Under the patronage of the then Pandarasannidhi of the Tiruvaduthurai Adheenam he reached greater heights and his name became a by-word in music circles for the profundity of his musical knowledge and general scholarship. As desired by the Pandarasannidhi he shifted his residence to Kumbakonam, where he spent four years. He received the title of "Gana Gandharva" and a gold "yagnopaveetham" studded with diamonds from the Pandarasannidhi.

Off to Madras

From Kumbakonam he went back to Madras with greater fame chasing him. Outstanding accompanists like Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer, Tiruchi Govindaswami Pillai amongst violinists and Azhaganambiam Pillai and Pudukottai Dakshinamurthi Pillai amongst mridangists vied for opportunities to accompany Anantharama Bhagavathar. That hard-to-please "Purist par excellence". Veena Dhanammal, paid him the compliment that "no other vocalist could distil the purity of a raga and endow it with rich sweetness as Anantharama Bhagavathar could".

At a performance in Madras, Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer stopped his violin accompaniment in the middle of the

concert to pay an unstinted tribute to Bhagavathar's musical genius. Once Bhagavathar was asked to sing before the Raja of Cochin for only 15 minutes as the latter was indisposed but when the Bhagavathar elaborated the raga 'Hamsadhvani' the ruler declared that the concert should have no time limit as his indisposition had vanished. After a concert of four hours the Raja complimented the Bhagavathar on the magic of his music and showered many gifts including a gold "VEERA SANGILI" (chain).

Mysore Honours Him

It was not long before the Maharaja of Mysore came to hear about the Bhagavathar's fame, invited him to his court and conferred on him the title of "GAYAKA SIKHAMANI." A diamond studded bracelet was also presented to him. He was a regular visitor to Karnataka during State functions. The link with this State continued even after his time because two of his nephews, viz. Palghat Someswara Bhagavathar and Arunachala Bhagavathar settled down in Bangalore. While the former has left behind him many leading musicians trained by him, the latter being dogged by indifferent health feels content with the fame achieved by his two daughters Jaya and (late) Bhagyam and his son T. A. S. Mani, who is one of the leading mridangists of Karnataka.

Palghat Anantharama Bhagavathar disappeared from the musical firmament on July 27, 1919, at the comparatively young age of 58, leaving an indelible stamp on Carnatic music.

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Anecdotes of Carnatic Musicians

[From time to time, this Journal had been publishing anecdotes about musicians - often with an uneasy thought in the Editor's mind that perhaps those events never occurred and that an overwrought imagination was often at the bottom of it all. However, it seems an incontrovertible fact that many readers like the feature and so it is being continued. There is one consolation: the tales bear witness to the sense of humour or perspicacity characterising the musicians in question — Ed.]

Veena Karaikudy Sambsaiva Iyer

A great scholar in music (to whom doubtful points were often referred) and a supreme symbol of the art of Veena playing, Sambasiva Iyer was not given to talking about music. He had, too, a mordant wit. Here is an example. That enlightened administrator Dr. B. V. Keskar, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, was present at a recital of the formidable vainika, and at the end, asked Vidwan Sambasiva Iyer to draw a comparison between the Hindusthani and Carnatic Systems of music. For a moment the veteran hesitated and then came out with the answer:

"Carnatic Sangeet is of pristine purity. In texture it is like the Ramaavathar. Hindusthani music has pursued a different and less stringent course, more like Krishna avathar".

What Sambasiva Iyer presumably had in mind is the fact that while in the Carnatic tradition a raga had the same structure and form everywhere in the South, in Hindusthani music we have many 'misra ragas' being born out of one raga. For example, with just 'ga ma ri sa' as the core, they have Durbari Kanada, Kapi-kanada etc. Similarly, from Malhar, they

evolve Megmalhar, Sarang Malhar, Ganda Malhar etc. (The late GNB gave those examples in an A.I.R. Broadcast on "Carnatic Bani")

Ariakudi Ramanuja Iyengar

When H. H. the Vanamamalai Jeer Swamigal visited Triplicane years ago, Gayakasikhamani Ramanuja Iyengar was sent for and he sang his masterpiece "Janaki Ramana" in Hindustani Kapi raga and "Dasarathasudha" in Jonpuri raga. The Jeer appreciated the Sahitya of the pieces and asked the name of the composer. Ariakudi respectfully stated that the two pieces had been composed by the Jeer's predecessor, to his great surprise. This true story highlights Ariakudi's extensive repertoire, in which he was literally unsurpassed.

Konerirajapuram Vaithyanatha Iyer

The fates took a big hand in the development of this musical colossus of our times who passed away in 1920 at the young age of 42. No one, not even the great Ariakudi, bestrode the stage as Vytha did. At the age of 12, his father put him in the care of Natasriar Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, the dance teacher. Then Nadaswara Vidwan Vaidyalingam Pillai coached him

for some time. Finally, he came under the tutelage of Manpoondia Pillai of Pudukkottai, the king of laya sastra. Dakshinamurthy Pillai also served his apprenticeship at the same time.

Later, the three of them figured in many concerts and "Mamundi" was proud of his pupil's progress in laya matters. Pallavis in four Kalai and eight Kalais were easy meat for Vaidyanatha Iyer, who in fact became a terror to many accompanying artists. Even "Mamundi" was once foxed by Vytha when he sang swaras at "Bhusuradi" in "Subramanyaya Namaste" kriti in Kambhodi with varying 'eduppus' — Thus, tala was like the red corpuscle in Vytha's musical system.

Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer has related an incident when with Tirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer as the violinist, Vytha in a command performance before the head of the Tiruvavaduthurai Adheenam, indulged in such elaborate rhythmic exercise that almost teased the great violin maestro. The Pandara Sannidhi called for Krishna Iyer's opinion of the level of the concert which he described as "too much pickle and too little rice". This opinion was endorsed by that patron, too. Vytha was not slow to take the hint.

Vytha from that time onwards concentrated on "Raga rasa pradhanya" and slowly reduced his tala gymnastics. It was this phase of his music that took him to the apogee of name and fame. And when, a few days before he died, Krishna Iyer called on him, the veteran musician again and again begged forgiveness of Krishna Iyer and, it seems, observed with belated wisdom "I have wasted many years thinking that music lay in the thigh (i.e. tala). Now I know it lies here only and he pointed his finger at his heart. He

was fated not to sing again with Krishna Iyer.

Paternal concern—Palghat Mani

The late Palghat Mani Iyer has told me this anecdote.

As a young boy of 12 he once accompanied quite a senior but obscure musician on the mridangam. In those days, his father used to accompany him wherever young Mani went. On this occasion, the musician indulged in non-stop singing of swaras for many avarthas without giving the young boy time to recover even his breath. At this, Seshu Bhagavathar's countenance was red with anger.

Mani, sharp as he was in observing things, had noticed this. As they went home after the concert, Mani Iyer assured his anxious parent that he was not in the least bothered by the musician's tactics to upset his aplomb. And he added, with a knowing eye: "Appa, I have now reached a stage when I can take care of myself. You need not escort me. I see that these things upset you". Moral: It is best for young artists that their father or guardian does not invariably go with them to concerts. The young ones learn self-reliance and pluck automatically.

Ariakudy's first concert

Ariakudi Ramanuja Iyengar had his first concert on the platform when he was 22. He waited for it and had put in hard work under his famous guru "Poochi Iyengar". But the circumstances of this maiden concert of his are extremely interesting.

A.R.A. R.S.M. Somasundaram Chettiar, a prominent banker of Devacottah, was deeply interested in musicians. At a

marriage in his house celebrated at Kandamur, the biggest musical giants of his day were featured. On the first day, it was "Poochi" Iyengar, then at the height of his fame (1912), with accompaniments in Thirukodikaval Krishna Iyer (Violin), Kumbakonam Azhaganambi Pillai (Mridangam), Pudukkottah Dikshinamurthy Pillai (Kanjira) and Umayalpuram Sundaram Iyer (Ghatam). Ariakudy, as usual gave vocal support to his guru. It turned out to be a grand concert for Poochi Iyengar.

Next morning, with the same accompanying artists, Konerirajapuram Vaithyanatha Iyer's concert took place. Poochi Iyengar, Ariakudy's father Thiruvankadathu Iyengar and many Vidwans were present. It was noon when the recital was nearing the end.

Just then, Somasundaram Chettiar had a brilliant idea: why not put young Ariakudi on the same platform, before such an august gathering? He went to Ariakudy's father to get his idea cleared. That veteran astrologer and "laukeeka" said: "Who am I to say 'yes' or 'no'? You should take permission from Ramanujam's guru, Poochi Iyengar". Chettiar, with utmost respect and courtesy, approached the guru who applauded the idea and observed that the opportunity and the circumstances were ideal for implementing Chettiar's suggestion. Somasundaram Chettiar was in the seventh heaven on getting such a constructive response from Poochi Iyengar.

But then what about accompaniments? There was no competent violinist or mridangist around; the brilliant ones on the platform had already put in 4 hours' hard work, besides the previous night's stint. Chettiar's mind was in a quandary.

Meanwhile the whisperings going on had caught the attention of those veterans themselves. And just before Konerirajapuram's concert ended, they beckoned to young Ramanujam to come near. Vaidyanatha Iyer finished his concert and called to young Ramanujam to get near the platform.

Young Ramanujam did not stir from where he was. But his eyes met his guru's and to his delight, there was complete approval in that glance. Poochi Iyengar spoke: "Ramanujam, go and sing with courage and calmness". Ramanujam prostrated himself before his guru whose words of blessing were "Let the Sangitha devathai be your guide and bestow "jayam" on your effort". What wonderful meaning and heartiness lay behind those words! Tears welled up in Ramanujam's eyes but he walked up to the platform with a firm gait.

On stage, seeing the lions of the music world on either side of him, Ariakudi's heart quailed. A fear was growing in his heart. He touched the platform with his fingers and raised them to his eyes in reverence and also made a respectful obeisance to the great Sadas present. He slowly picked up courage. As he was sitting too deep on the dais, the great Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer clasped his right hand and said "come to the front" ('முன்னுக்கு வா') evidently with double meaning. The crowd gave a spontaneous cheer. In Ariakudi's mind, a great weight was lifted.

Next problem was, what to begin with? He decided that his guru's favourite offering to Sri Thyagaraja viz. "Vidalanu Kothandapani" Kriti in Thodi would be appropriate. So he sang a snatch of Thodi, some of the phrases of which put

Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer in so much rapport that he said 'Sabash' many times. Ariakudi took the cue and gave of his best. No one was more pleased than Poochi Iyengar himself and when Somasundaram Chettiar offered Ramanujam 5 gold sovereigns, fruits and flowers, the sishya went and placed them all before his happy guru and prostrated himself. Ariakudi's father was the recipient of congratulations, but he genuinely believed his son's success was due to the blessings of his guru and the

elder musicians who encouraged him so unstintingly.

It is worth recording that after this inaugural concert, Poochi Iyengar himself told Ramanujam that, musically, he had come of age, that further gurukulavasa was not necessary and that Ramanujam could engage himself fully in a musical career. What prophetic insight! How well did Ariakudi fulfil his guru's predictions and become one of the leading musicians of all time. And what a thrilling debut.

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The Bharata Natyam Scene Today

By

KINNARI

Oh! the moment I switch on the radio, she is up on her feet and how she gestures and gyrates with every beat of the rhythm and each surge of melody! So adores every mother who conjures in her tiny tot visions of a future Balasaraswathy. There is no home where ankle-bells do not tinkle, no family which has not put one or other of its daughters on the Arangetram pad. No dearth of dance schools or teachers either. Every corner of the city or suburb hums with 'solkattus'. Every other week sees a debutante 'ascend the stage' with all that glamorous paraphernalia, glittering jewellery, gorgeous costumes, 'puffed up' orchestra and under the glare of multi-coloured lights.

Dance Explosion

That, in short, sums up the dance scene today. Call it a dance explosion if you will. And this is all the more relevant to Bharata Natyam which has spread beyond regional boundaries, beyond high seas and broken language shackles. From near-extinction not very long ago to almost a massive explosion, a gigantic growth all within half a century! From a couple of families of Natyacharyas with an unbroken lineage which was all that the art form could lay claim to as heirloom, to multiples of institutions and instructors—each with claims to 'gurudom' and a style of its own!

No doubt, a great leap forward. But at what cost? Has the art strayed off tradition, evolved and nurtured over the

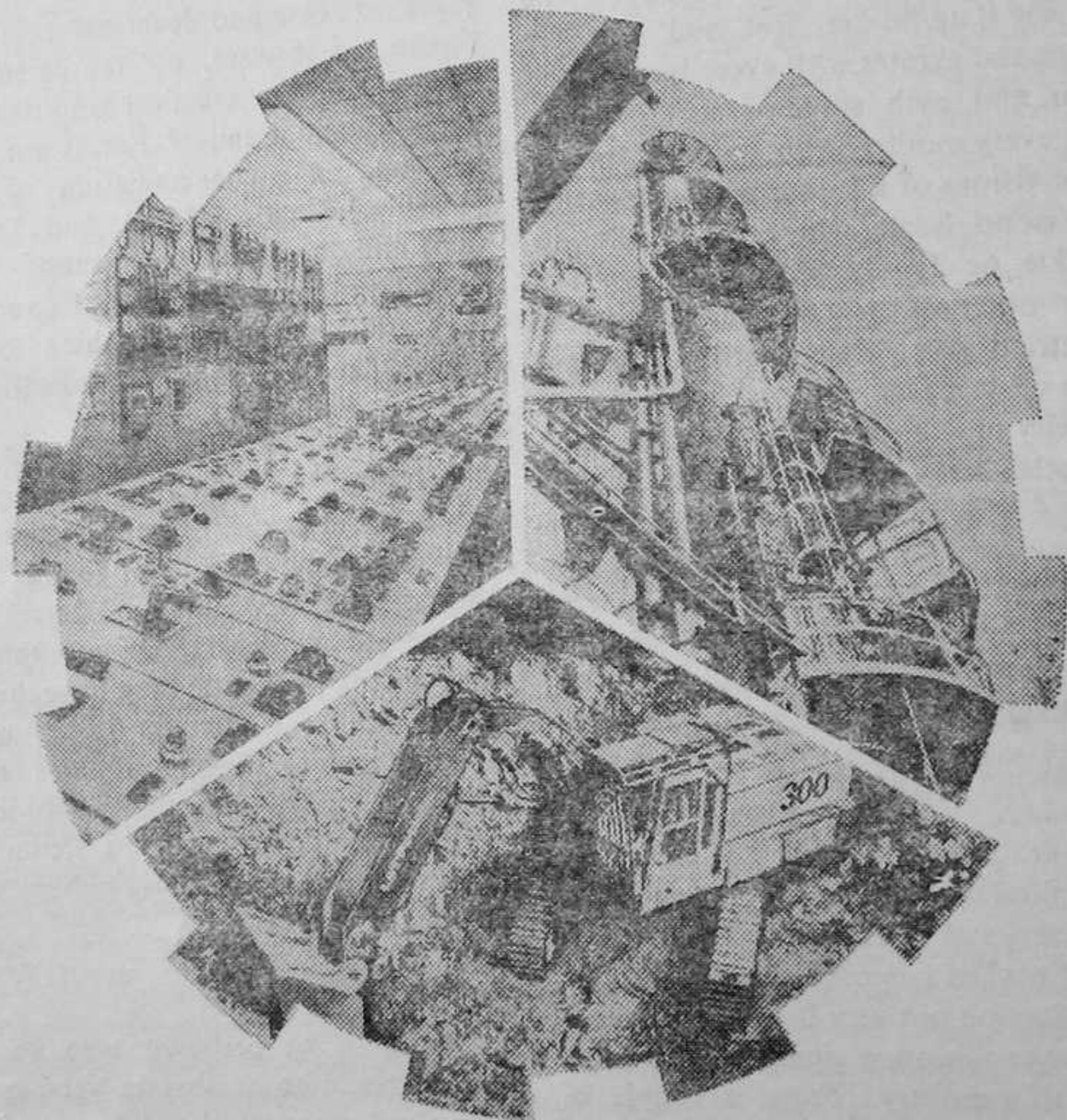
years with care and devotion? Can dancers turned, as it were, off the assembly line truly uphold the classical tradition in all its purity and dignity? For, is not Bharata Natyam, a consummation of Bhava (emotion), Raga (melody) and Tala (rhythm) and one of the "most subtle, sophisticated and graceful styles of dance art in the world" demanding nothing less than intense devotion, absolute dedication and relentless Sadhaka?

It must, however, be said here that this is not in any way to underestimate the intelligence and capacity of young art enthusiasts or exponents. Rather, there is widespread awareness, an art consciousness among the youth; they have the thrust and the will to study its deeper nuances and aesthetics. The opportunities are also aplenty. But how far this will to learn is dominant and does not fall a victim to the impulse to perform and win public acclaim is a matter for debate.

Tradition & Evolution

It would be pertinent here to recall how the tradition of Bharata Natyam recital evolved, what trends in course of time influenced the art, how far have these added to its healthy growth, how much distortion or decay caused and what measures could be taken to retrieve the situation if found necessary? Tradition may roughly be defined as a corpus of acquired knowledge and forms, handed down from generations and crystallised on practical lines. Tradition is never static. It grows,

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adapting itself to the changing socio-economic scenarios which influence the cultural expressions too. While absorbing such enduring factors, necessary for progress, it sheds superficialities which may creep in. However at times superficialities do cloud the clime but never distort the core.

Evolution

What came to be called Bharata Natyam, known earlier, as 'Sadir' we learn took centuries to evolve and develop; and it was only in the 19th century that a codified concert tradition with well-knit repertoire crystallised at the hands of the Tanjore Quartet—Ponniah, Chinnayya, Vadivelu and Sivanandam. Hailing from a family of Natyacharyas who were also As-thana Vidwans, (grandfather Gangamuthu and father Subbarayan) the Quartet, patronised by the Maratha rulers of Tanjore and Maharajas of Travancore, set up a tradition comprehensive enough to be a devotional offering at the temple as well as a chamber performance at the royal durbar. What better acknowledgement could they get for their achievement than from their guru, Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar who hailed them as "Bharata Sreshta" for having laid the foundations of Bharata Natyam training similar to what the Sangita Pitamaha Sri Purandaradasa did for Karnatak music?

The Repertoire

Now to the dance repertoire Bharata Natyam has been described as "an artistic yoga consecrating the body to attain spiritual sanctity". To quote Balasaraswathy, "the dancer makes her body as an instrument at least for the duration of the dance for the experience and expression of the spirit". And could there be any better scheme than the one codified by the Tanjore quartet, extending from Alarippu to Sloka, from body to mind and then on to utterly relaxed evocation from the inner

self? It encompasses in its perception a balanced treatment of *nritta* (pure dance), *nriya* (*nritta* with expression) and *natya*, (pure expression with expansive evocation). It envisages an elaborate training in the basics of the technique comprising *adavus*, *hastas* and *mudras*, movements of the various limbs of the body from head to toes as laid down in Bharata's *Natya Sastra*, and other treatises.

Alarippu

The recital starts after invocation (prayer) with the dancer making offerings to the Lord, with Alarippu. Only, that she offers herself. That is what it is in Alarippu, etymologically derived from the root 'arpa-nam'. As it has to be in this art form it is done through gestures and the dancer poised on the *samapada* with *anjali hasta* as a lotus bud blossoms under the spell of Geeta, Vadya and Nriya. This acquires special distinction to a debutante in modern connotation too, as she presents her 'art acquisition' before her preceptors and connoisseurs. A rhythm-based pure dance, Alarippu, in other words, relaxes the dancer's body, attunes her to rhythm and sets her on greater concentrations. It also reveals the talent in her, her rhythmic responses and graceful disposition.

Jatiswaram

Follows then a more decorative dance of melody and movement, the Jatiswaram, combining the basic unit of dance, that is Jati with the basic unit of music, that is swara. Thus it is Raga set to Tala, simple swara passages embellished with jostling jati variations. In the pre-Quartet period it appears to have been literally a jati and swara combined in a melodic format. Gangamuthu Annavi's Jatiswaras followed this pattern. Perhaps this form still prevails in Kuchipudi repertoire. For instance, the Atana Jatiswaram

many of the Kuchipudi dancers perform. In the Quartet's codification, Jatiswaram however retained the swara passages and jatis became latent to form the base of intricate rhythmic variations. With its symmetry of line and form, matching of footwork and gestures all set to intricate laya permutations and combinations and with overall synchronism on melodic lines, Jatiswaram evokes aesthetic appeal and its sheer beauty is a feast to the eyes.

Sabdam

With Raga and Tala set, Nritta implying control of body and mind is established and it is now the turn of Sahitya which introduces Abhinaya. And Sabdam, a song - narrative in praise of a deity or a monarch and identified by the opening Thathakkaram fills this bill. This brings in glimpses of Nritya as solkattu stances precede and follow 'sahitya sancharis'. Sabdams are conventionally in Kambhoji and set to Misra Chapu Tala though they are also set to Ragamalika for aural embellishment.

Varnam

The recital reaches its peak in Varnam which brings colour and concentration. An elaborate network of Nritta in its most intricate and complex designs with chiselled *theermanams* and *abhinaya*, giving each lyrical stance elaborate interpretations, make the number substantial and most demanding. Nritya too, is infused in the *Tattimettadavu* sequences at the end of the sancharis of each sahitya stance. Thus, it is a consummation of Bhava, Raga and Tala putting to test the training and talent, skill and stamina of the dancer on the one hand and the choreographic ingenuity and conducting acumen of the Guru on the other.

Just as the Varnam in a music concert gives the musician a command over the raga, laya and sahitya enunciation, in dance it enlarges the scope of the dancer's improvisation, deepens her expressive vision and sharpens her control over technique. Whereas in a music recital it is the 'get set', in dance it is the piece-de-resistance.

Sringara Element

Often Shringara with its variants figures supreme in Varnam. It is not mere eroticism but a symbolism reflecting the mystic union of the human with the divine. A connoisseur of arts once remarked "As is often depicted in the Bible, God or his avatar is allegorically represented as a bridegroom and the faithful votary as his bride. The spiritual experience of union with the godhead is represented in mortal terms as the consummation of physical love with the beloved. Sathvikhabhinaya, the subtle expression, goes a long way in conveying the latent bhava and is more than an attempt to reproduce real life expression. While the former has an aesthetic and elevating appeal, the latter tends to bring down the quality of rendition. It should not be difficult to rise above the mere earthy quality on to a higher plane once the dancer involves her body and mind in the dance concept. It is similar to the musician getting absorbed in the raga and sahitya bhava when engaged in kriti rendition or niraval.

Pada Varnas

Pada Varnas in vilamba kala pattern are ideally suited for dance exposition. The Tanjore Quartet have composed a number of Pada Varnas. Some like the Bhairavi, Sankarabharanam and Khamas Varnams have sahitya in more than one language for the same varnamettu.

Swarajathis too offer ample scope in this format. The Useni and Khamas Swarajathis "Emayalaadira" and "Mohalagirimeerude" respectively are popular ones. Tana Varnas of late have captured dancers' attention. The one that is quite popular is the Bhairavi Ata Tala Varnam "Viriboni".

Padams

After the peak, it is the phase of relaxed expression. Bhava reflected through abhinaya reigns supreme here and Padams fit in here best. Padams are highly evolved structures of melody and moods. If musically they are ragas crystallised, dance-wise they are the storehouse for bhava exposition. The sentiments and emotions latent in lyrics are subtly moulded into the melodic streams and that holds immense scope for visual delineation especially in Mukhabhinaya and Netrabhinaya. In fact each flexion of the body is geared into visualisation in dance. In Dr. Mulk Raj Anand's pictureseque observation, "Flowers open up in the hands of the dancer, and birds fly off from the tips of fingers, the body sways, now in pride and now in devotion, each muscle of the face is transformed, the eyes move in blandishment or scorn and the eyebrows express horror or suspicion even as the whole face expresses different and contrary feelings in the same breath".

Sringara, the predominant rasa, is treated on an expansive canvas involving Nayaka-Nayaki bhava. Itihasas from the mythologies provide the material too.

Padams for dance form a special genre by themselves, for in a given 'sthaiy-bhava' they hold scope for sanchari bhavas of varying moods. Almost all the emotions

human beings go through find expression in padas. It is the interpretative capacity for elaborate abhinaya which accords Indian dance its unique quality and makes it distinctive from dances of other nations.

Musical Sense

To achieve rapport with abhinaya, why with dance itself, knowledge of music and musical sense is very essential. After all, dance provides the visual dimension to musical nuances. The traditional nattuvanars and devadasis were themselves good musicians. Many of the performing professionals are good singers too.

Significant among the composers who have enriched the Padam repertoire are Kshetragnya, Veerabhadrayya and Sarangapani in Telugu and Vaideeswarankoil-Subbarama Iyer, Ghanam Krishnayyar, Muthu Tandavar and Gopala Krishna Bharati in Tamil. Javalis, which form a subsection of the Padam session, are also love-lyrics but in a lighter vein of lilting melody and somewhat help to relieve the emotional seriousness built up by the padas. One of the numbers in the abhinaya segment is reserved for the cosmic dancer whose Tandava nritya, no dancer would like to miss.

The Tillana

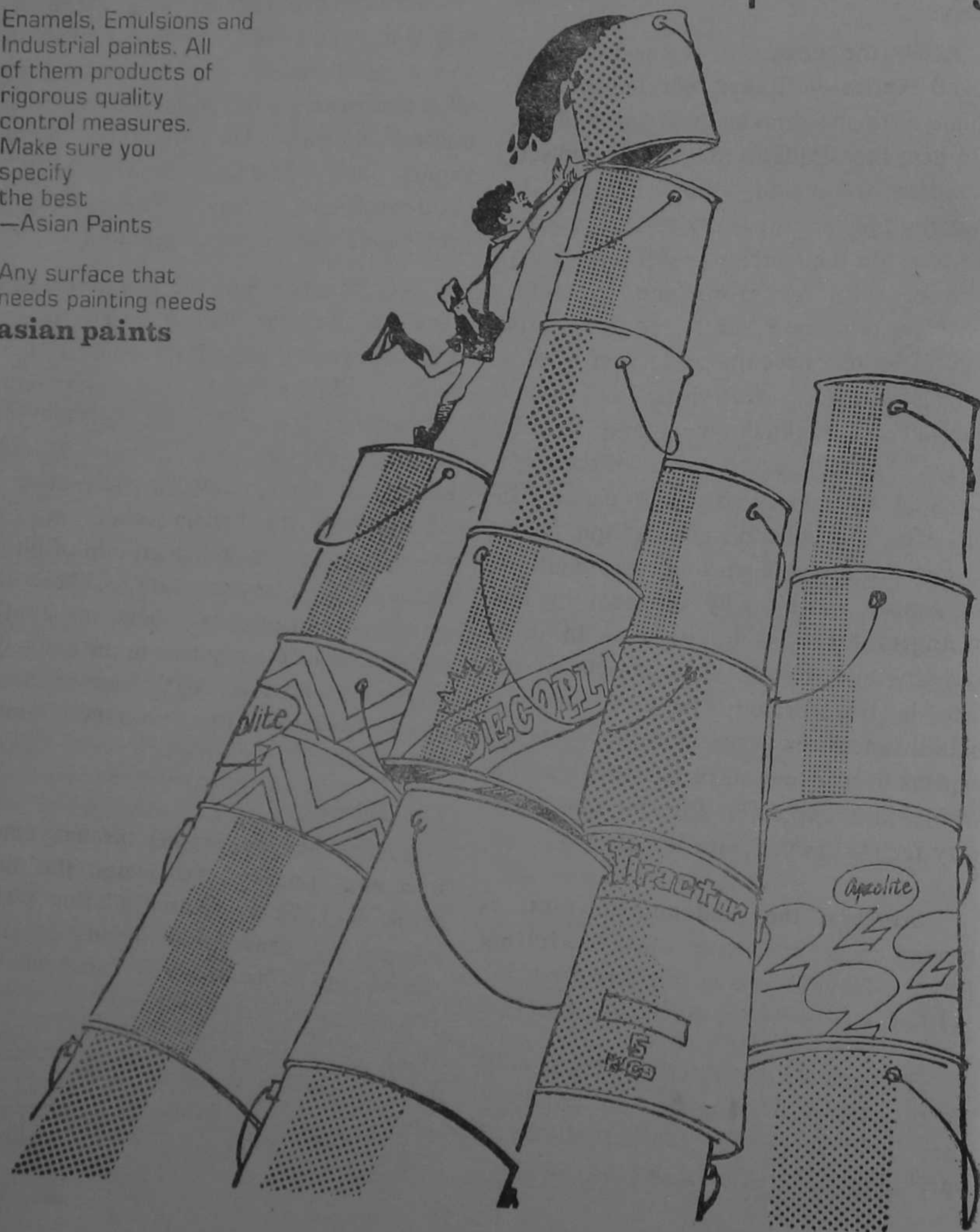
After the long journey through emotions and timeless mythologies, the final sprint is Tillana. With alluring poses-pancha-gati phases culminating in crisp teermanams Tillana, a pure dance number reverberating with rhythm, comes as a crowning culmination. The *joie-de-vivre* that it gives some scope for talented dancers to improvise and for gurus to choreograph, inspiration coming from temple sculpture

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It was not for nothing that Bala visualises a Bharata Natyam recital as a workshop in a temple:

“The Bharata Natyam recital is structured like a grand temple; we enter through the gopuram (outer hall) of the Alarippu, course the Ardhamandapam (half-way hall) of Jatiswaram, then the mahamandapa (great hall of Sabdam, and enter the only precincts of the deity in Varnam. This is the place, the space which gives the dancer expansive scope to revel in the rhythm, moods and music of the dance. The Varnam provides the fullest scope to her own creativity as well as to the tradition of the art. The rhythmic virtuosity of the Varnam yield to soul stirring music and abhinaya of the padam which is akin to the withdrawal of the cascading lights of worship and the drum beats to simple and solemn chanting of sacred verses in the closeness of God. The Tillana then breaks into movement like the final burning of the camphor accompanied by a measure of din and bustle. Finally the devotee takes to her heart the God she has glorified from outside by dancing to a simple devotional verse.”

The recital as chalked out by the quartet ends on an austere note of sloka either culled from ‘Krishna Karnamrita’, or depicting the Navarasas.

The New Phase

The close of the 19th Century and early 20th Century saw a lull in traditional arts, thanks to the alien rule and the outcries of the native conservatives. The anti-nautch movement they staged provoked the pioneers of the art to rise in revolt and the thirties saw stalwarts like E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Arundale surging with a missionary zeal to revive Bharata Natyam. The reascent effort was phased out in a two-fold programme of training and presentation with a view to reviving its dignity and restoring to it, respectability. Traditional Natyacharyas like Kattumannarkoil Muthukumarappa Pillai, Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai were entrusted with training the art aspirants who included girls from communities other than devadasis and especially Brahmins. Kalakshetra was founded by Rukmini amidst the sylvan surroundings of Adyar. Stalwarts Tiger Varadachariar, Mysore Vasudevachar were brought in to teach music alongside. Other natyacharyas like Tiruvidaimarudur Kuppiyah Pillai, Pandanallur Chokkalingam Pillai and later

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Vazhuvur Ramiah Pillai came to the fore, training select talents. The repertoire of the Tanjore Quartet came in handy for following *in toto*. Stage presentation, however, required changes as shift in patronage from durbar to Sabha auspices had become then marked. Accompanists who so long were "shadowing" the dancers were accorded respectable wings. Melodious flute replaced the heavy clarinet and violin was included to enhance the textural quality of music. Costumes in pleasing shades added to the decor. The emphasis of course was on art projection. Rukmini, Balasaraswati, Kalanidhi, Ram Gopal were all exponents of this era.

Wider Spread

Independence gave fillip to the democratisation of arts. With large scale patronage of sabhas and organisations, there emerged new styles and schools with individual stamps alongside traditional houses. Branches from the latter brought in its wake some changes too. If one style reflected a harmonious blend of nritta and abhinaya, the other sustained on bhava alone with a mixture of histrionics, leaving nritta to a backseat; while another projected the personal self with such zest that, at times, it even surpassed theatrical proportions. Some made the nritta look like physical exercises (body kinetics) and some gave the accent on aesthetic grace and 'azhutham' in nritta and subtle evocation in abhinaya. Yet another introduced bounteous abandon out of the sheer joy of dancing where abhinaya or nritta acquired vivacity but not perhaps that weight. Pandanallur, Tanjore which included Tiruvidaimarudur, Vazhuvur are some of the wellknown traditional styles from which branches shot off, adding some personal stamp.

Advent of institutions

With the spread of dance outside the south, institutionalised training came to stay. These institutions drew students from various communities since language was no problem. In the ensuing cosmopolitan atmosphere, new trails have been blazed by adopting hymns and verses from languages other than South Indian for dance choreography. Several Universities have also provided for a streamlined study of the art form, Meanwhile Dr. Padma Subramaniam's researches in Karanas, ancient Tamil literature and inscriptions have led to some interesting reconstruction of this art form. And researches into the Marathi compositions of Kings Serfoji and Shahaji of Tanjore brought to light repertoire in the Ekhartha nritya called Nirupanas similar to that codified by the Quartet with some more numbers which had been absorbed in musical systems or become obsolete. The Nirupanas with comprehensive notation added a new dimension to choreography which Acharya Parvati Kumar fully availed of.

Cosmopolitan

A recent development has been a full length 'Bharata Natya Margam' in Gujarati by Elakshi Thakur (Vide author's 'Cultural Scene in Bombay' in "SHANMUKA issue of Apr. 1982). And it goes to the credit of the late Anjali Merh, a product of Kalakshetra, to have composed and choreographed "Chandramowleeswara Kuravanji" in Bharata Natyam style with Gujarati lyrics set to appropriate Karnatak and Hindustani ragas.

A Broader Structure

Dance dramas and ballets have captured the fascination of eminent dancers and dance choreographers. While Kalakshetra has become renowned in producing

dance dramas from mythology and epics, Darpana of Mrinalini Sarabhai experimented on mimetic works, too, besides mythological themes. And she also experimented combining Bharata Natyam and Kathakali. Ekartha Nritya has been Padma Subramaniam's speciality, while Kamala, Vijayantimala, Chitra Visweswaran have all come out with ballets of varying shades. Oriental dances which held sway for some time faded away in due course.

New Repertoire

Repertoirewise, too there are large scale additions today. Apart from the Quartet's compositions and padams of early composers, Varnams and Kritis of Papanasam Sivan and those of the Musical Trinity have been inducted into the repertoire, not to speak of the Hindustani compositions of Swati Tirunal. Plus 'Sontha Sahityams' (own compositions) of Gurus, like what we have in music, have also been given place on the dance stage. Devanames of Purandaradasa, Kanaka Dasa and Vyasarayya, Andal's Pasurams and lilting compositions of Uthukadu Venkatasubbier have lent themselves to exquisite dance choreography.

An Inquiry

Could all these have caused the drift from tradition and led to a fall in standards as is sometimes felt? Perhaps Yes, to a certain extent, but certainly not in perception and basics. In fact the scope of the art form which is vast as the ocean, has been further widened and it has gained in breadth and popularity. The same, however, cannot be said of the standard of presentation. Fall in the standards is a bane of the art form today. Rightly does Dr. Mulk Raj Anand lament that at the moment there are not even a hundred accomplished dancers of Bharata Natyam among our six hundred millions!

Where does deterioration begin? It begins at home basically in parental indulgence and reading "innate talent" in mere fascination where there is none. Training the children in art would in itself do no harm. It would, on the contrary, help them at least build their physique, imbibe some rhythm sense and rear them into an informed rasika, so essential for any art promotion. The trouble starts the moment the learner and her parents are bitten by the 'performing bug'. What ensues is hustle in training and presentation. To which no less is the contribution of obliging teachers keen on making a quick name and a fast buck. Those who offer package courses of two to three years do incalculable harm to the art form and to society.

The Short Circuit

Imagine youngsters performing with only one set of repertoire to their credit! Do they not have to spend fifteen years to graduate in the academic stream? How come then, an art with so much subjective intuitive elements and learnt in classrooms be mastered in such a short span? It is not enough if one is thorough with one's lines and *theermanams*, *adavus* and *sancharibhavas*. One should have an innate response and rapport, a spontaneity to visually interpret with ease and grace. "Bharatham Paththu Varusham" is not a mere sermon. ("Bharatham Takes 10 years"). Many a time teachers are not themselves fully equipped to conduct the performance. Choreographic liberties taken with the technique at times malign the presentation. Though mostly the same as they had learnt, their inertia to correct the loose ends of their students' postures or their impulse for newer combinations causes deterioration in quality. Adavu combinations and solkattus for instance, have certain correlations and taking liberties would amount to tampering with technique.

Degenerate Tendencies

The fault lies no less in the aspiring dancers too. To some, performing art means mere 'grand spectacle' which lays stress only on showmanship. Learning under many gurus, too, tends to dissipate their energy and talent. When they start their own institution they tend to camouflage! Where they learn more than one dance style, their proficiency too is impaired. They remain a jack-of-all dances, mastering none.

One of the forces contributing to the drift has been the 'creative choreography' and innovations impairing the traditional repertoire. Protagonists of the former claim to be trend-setters to whom cliches like classicism and folkism make no meaning. Many prefer lokadharmi to natyadharmi to make it easy and appealing though they may not admit it. What they try to impart to dance is a real-life impression not often in good taste when performed on stage. Add to it sound effects and orchestral props, you have theatrical art imposed on dance.

Exit Sabdam

Another disquieting trend is the slow elimination of the Sabdam and its replacement by a more narrative composition. The purpose of introducing *nritya* (sahitya too) it is argued, is served by a descriptive devotional. Probably the latter gives scope for varying poses being employed and thereby enhancing dance appeal. The elimination of Sabdam has much to do with the liberty taken with the Varnam. The trend to present the whole of Ramayana in varnam format as in Swati Tirunal's "Bhavayami" or Dasavathara as in "Kamalajasya" or the urge to substitute the traditional Varnam with a Tyagaraja Pancharatnam leaves the Sabdam redundant. The varnam-substitutes, though not inferior in any visual appeal or lacking in technique, however do not rise up to the grandeur of the original (varnam) built up tier-by-tier with a single theme to a grand climax.

Music, an essential limb of dance presentation is not accorded the place it deserves. Quality music with raga bhava and akshara suddha is as essential as 'succinct, slick dance visualisation'.

Compering

A new facet to modern dance presentation is compering which often tends to be superfluous and distracting. A brief synopsis will serve as a guide to cosmopolitan audiences and foreigners.

The Remedy

What curbs could be imposed and ameliorative measures implemented to retrieve the situation?

Package courses and short cuts to arangetram should forthwith be done away with. Even at institutional levels intensive training for a number of years under a renowned guru should be made compulsory before getting on to the perform. Performing aspirants should become proficient in Nattuvangam. Practising nattuvangam by marking tala on hand would improve their laya grip and help them perform with 'Swanubhava'. All that mechanical-physical exercise that we see in nritta would automatically vanish.

Music should be made compulsory for dancers to learn. Study of Bharata's Natya Sastra and other traditional works should be undertaken.

Dedication Needed

And finally nothing like dedication and intense sadhaka to which Bala's tips for abhinaya serve as an ideal guideline: The whole being, limbs in coordination, should "express abhinaya moving with the sangati, the gamaka and not just the tala" Do an entire song with just facial expression. That would be a good exercise initially to grasp the range of emotions before bringing in the ancillaries - the limbs. Once facial flexions are mastered, doing abhinaya with absorption and rapport would be a pleasure"

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Ariyakudi, the Colossus

by

Prof. T. V. RAMANUJAM

Gayaka Sikhamani, Sangeetha Ratnakara, Sangeetha Kalanidhi, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was a colossus among the great "performing musicians" of the last five decades and more.

The Tamil saint, Tiruvalluvar, has said :

"What is it that you do not have if you have a good wife? What is it that you have if you have a bad wife?"

On the same lines, it could be asked of Ariyakudi's music :

Is there anything good in Carnatic music which is not in Ariyakudi's concert ?

Is there anything bad in Carnatic music which is ever found in Ariyakudi's music ?

The Quintessence

Ariyakudi's music contained the quintessence of all that is best, chaste, rounded and refined in our ancient and great system of music. He avoided all excrescences, impertinences and deviations from "Sampradaya". Today many deviate from artistic "Sampradaya" and "Suddha Paataantharam" in the name of 'originality' and 'creativity'!

The late G. N. Balasubramaniam, who belonged to the next generation after Ariyakudi once observed that it was Ariyakudi who set both the pattern and the standard of the type of concerts (*kucheri*) which pleased both the lay-

listeners and the experts. Connoisseurs of Carnatic music of those days like Prof. P. Sambomorthy, Kirtanaacharya Shri C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Shri N. V. Raghavan, and Vidwan Namakkal Sesha Iyengar found Ariyakudi's music absolutely impeccable both in the *grammar* (in the tala and rhythmic aspects) and in the *poetry* of music (like raga alapana, krithis, niraval, pallavi, jaavalis etc).

A Durbar

Another remark of GNB is unforgettable :

"Iyengarvaal holds each concert like a *Durbar*". What he meant by this was that Ariyakudi never allowed his concerts to be dominated by any of the accompanying instrumentalists, whether it was a violinist of the eminence of Chowdiah or Rajamanickam Pillai or Papa Venkatramaiah., or mridangam accompanists like Pudukottai Dakshinamurthy, Kumbakonam Azhaganambi Pillai or Palani Subbudu or even that genius Palghat Mani Iyer. To each accompanying artiste, he undoubtedly gave his due. But, none was allowed to dominate or steal the thunder.

Perfectionist

Another remarkable feature of Ariyakudi's performance was that he never slurred over either the swara or the sahitya, or allowed any "false" voice to creep in. Every sound was fullthroated and came from the "naabhi" or the navel,

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which is another way of saying that it was all rounded and perfect without any pricking edges.

Akaara Singer

Equally striking was Ariyakudi's reputation for "Akshara Suddhi". He abhorred the use of "OOOs" and "EEEs" and "Thatharinnaa's" in rendering ragas. This is by no means a reflection on very eminent performers who were even more popular than Ariyakudi, but who indulged in using these sounds, only because it suited their health and their style. They could not sing continuously and had to develop step by step, and therefore it looked as though they were "cutting" the ragas piece by piece! Their music belonged to another order of excellence.

Ariyakudi made no facial contortions like several eminent performers, past and present. Ariyakudi's face will be absolutely normal, and it will appear as though he was not at all straining himself while producing the musical sounds he wanted.

Palghat Mani's Tribute

Two decades ago, the late Palghat Mani Iyer said at the Shanmukhananda Hall (Bombay) that he had accompanied Ariyakudi for 38 years and that more than half of his (Mani's) performances were with the maestro. No other vocalist gave him so much unalloyed joy as Ariyakudi.

Iyengarvaal's music was simple, but not easy. "It will look as though we can all sing like him, but it is only an illusion that is created in our minds, because it is so attractive; but the moment we attempt to produce even one 'sangathi' of Iyenger, we will find how miserably we fail". Mani Iyer pointed out that all great things were simple but not easy.

Vedic precepts like *Dharmam Chara* or *Satyam Vada* appear simple, but were not easy to translate into action.

The doyen of Carnatic music, Semman-gudi Srinivasa Iyer echoes Mani Iyer's views, and his admiration for Ariyakudi's repertoire, full-throatedness and Akaara Saadhakam is profound.

A Born Leader

Ariyakudi was a pace-setter, standard-bearer and patternmaker. He neither believed in speaking in the middle of his concerts nor allowed much interval between one item and another item. He did not indulge in too many rare or *apoorva* ragas. He said that the rare ragas must be used rarely. He believed in including in a concert several "prasidda-ragas" like Sahana, Kanada, Begada, Kapi, Sindhu Bhairavi, Panthuvrali, Yadukula Kambodhi, Poorvi Kalyani, and a few "rakthi" or "ghanaragas" like Thodi, Kalyani, Bhairavi, Kambodhi and Sankarabaranam.

Amazing Sense of Proportion

In his concert there was a place for everything, but there was not too much place for anything! For example, he never had a raga prelude for every kriti. Nor did he indulge in "Kalpana Swaras" for every kriti! Some kritis will be started by him straightaway without any raga prelude, and will be ended also without any swara rendering. There will be items which will be rendered in Madhyama Kaala, some in Vilamba Kaala and some in Duritha Kaala. However, most of them will be in Madhyama Kaala. Ramanuja Iyengar believed that Madhyama Kaala is like rice in a South Indian vegetarian meal! There will be in his concerts some compositions of the great Trinity, of Swath

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Thirunal and Purandaradsa, and of Arunachala Kavi and Kshetragna. But there will be more of the compositions of the greatest of them all—one to whom Bhagavan Ramachandra gave "Prathyaksha Seva", namely, Saint Thyagaraja.

In other words, he had a remarkable sense of proportion. He was a master of humour and puns, called in Tamil as "sle-dai". On one occasion, he told me that a music concert should be like a well-proportioned bungalow. "Should it not have a small compound with useful trees and flowers, a drawing room, a dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom etc? Will you like a bungalow which has only a drawing room and nothing else? Similarly, in a music concert there should be a place for everything but not too much place for anything".

When it was pointed out to him that his music concert was criticised by some as being stereotyped, his reply was that anything perfect would appear stereotyped. "If your wife makes excellent coffee today and makes equally excellent coffee everyday, will you, on the ground of the coffee becoming stereotyped, ask her to put some salt and asafoetida in it?"

A Never Failing Formula

Ariyakudi knew how to make every concert of his a success. He knew how to sing and what to sing when his throat was in a perfectly healthy condition. If however, his throat was badly affected by a severe cold or laryngitis, he knew what songs he should select and how he should sing them! Therefore, he always made a success of his concerts.

One of the very eminent Vainikas of today, Sangeetha Kalanidhi Principal

K. S. Narayanaswamy remembers a concert of Ariyakudi performed before a large gathering in Tanjore some two decades ago, when his throat was very hoarse. Ariyakudi chose such songs and rendered them in such a way that the listeners enjoyed them from the beginning to the end!

Genuine humility

Ariyakudi was a master not only of "Sangeetha" but also of "Ingitha" or appropriateness. Never did he speak a single word derogatory to fellow-musicians.

His humility was deep and genuine. Whenever admirers gathered round him immediately after a concert and expressed their joy, he would attribute his successful performance to Thyaga Brahman and Sri Raghavan sahayam. Palghat Mani Iyer once said: "It is not Ariyakudi who is singing so excellently, for four hours continuously, at the age of seventy and more! It is Saint Thyagaraja who enables him to sing like this. How else can any mortal sing at this age so full-throatedly and yet so sweetly and admirably?"

One of the most popular and outstanding performers of the same generation or even slightly older than the one to which Ariyakudi belonged, namely, Sangeetha Samraat Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavata, sent a special emissary, Shri P. A. Raman of Bharatiya Music & Arts Society, to Kumbakonam to fetch Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar to Chembai so that he could sing on the occasion of Sri Chembai's Shashtiabdapoorthi.

It is well-known that Kalki Krishna-moorthy was one of the earliest and staunchest sponsors and supporters of the "Tamil Isai Movement". Ariyakudi was among the earliest performers who introduced a very substantial number of fine Tamil songs in his concerts--compositions of one of the greatest composers in Tamil Shri Papanasam Sivan, Arunagiri Nathar, Gopalakrishna Bharathi, "Kuthambhai" Siddhar, and so on. In fact, his repertoire of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and

Sanskrit songs was truly amazing. He made such songs as "Mangaai Paal Undu", "Siva Dikshaa" in Kurinji, "Antharama Soundaryam" in Kedaragowlam and several others, truly unforgettable.

Ariyakudi used to sing without the aid of any mike for more than a decade and was heard, in pin-drop silence, by many hundreds of listeners in the very old sabhas like Sri Parthasarathy Swamy Sabha of Madras.

(Courtesy, Bhavan's Journal.)

Prof. T. V. Ramanujam Honoured



Kalai Kavalari Padma Shri Prof. T. V. Ramanujam was honoured by the Viswa Unnyayan Samsad on the 15th of August 1983 with the following Awards :

- (1) Viswa Unnyayan Sanskriti Ratna (as you are aware Sanskriti means Culture).
- (2) Appointment to all the Committees and Academy's Council and Bodies of the Samsad as Honorary Member.
- (3) DOCTOR of CULTURE, and
- (4) National Professorship of CULTURE.

The VISWA UNNYAYAN SAMASAD, (English translation is WORLD DEVELOPMENT PARLIAMENT) has its Head Quarters at Midnapur in West Bengal. Its Director General, Shri Saptaravi, who is a highly dedicated person who devotes his entire life for developing the usefulness and prestige of the Samsad. It has an Information Centre and Office in Delhi. Its Convocation, at which these Awards are awarded, is always held in Delhi. The Convocations are held either on Independence Day—15th August—or on Republic Day—26th January.

Viswa Unnyayan Samsad has as its primary objective the *discovery* of, the *recognition* of and *acknowledgement* of high talents in various directions like music, dance, fine arts, sculpture, medicine, inventions and even mountaineering.

Some other instances of Awards are : Mrinalini Sarabhai was awarded Doctor of DANCE. Padma Bhushan S. Balachander was awarded Doctor of VEENA and also the title of Father of VEENA, and Sri Balamurali Krishna Doctor of Music. Hearty Congratulations.

Prof. RAMANUJAM.

Mylapore Gowri - A Great exponent of Abhinaya

By

N. R. BHUVARAHAN, Art Critic, "THE HINDU"

From the Saraboji era, up to our own day, the great traditions of Bharata Natya have been preserved and handed down to posterity by brilliant exponents and erudite Nattuwanars who were steeped in music and learning. One can recall with pride in this era illustrious names like Pudukottai Ammalu, Baroda Gowri and Kanthimathi, Bangalore Sita, Thovur Subbalakshmi who all danced their way to fame.

Tiruvarur Gnanam, Vazuvor Nagamma and Maduranthakam Jagadambal formed a memorable trio and the former became a legendary figure for her exposition of the famous Useni Svarajati "Ee Mayaladina" in Rupakam. Tanjore Veena-bhasini, Muthurathnamba, Karaikal Saradambal, Mylapore Gowri, Tiruvalaputtur Kalyani daughters, Bhanumathi and Varalakshmi were traditionalists of a high order.

Among these, Gowri of Mylapore was an institution by herself. She was a brilliant dancer in her prime and middle age and became a teacher in her last years.

Gowri Born in 1892 in Madras as the daughter of Doraikannu Ammal learnt Bharata Natya under Tanjore Kandappa Nattuvanar (teacher of Smt. Balasaraswathi) and Nellaiappa Nattuvanar, the father of Kandappa. She was extremely

fortunate to get special training in abhinaya from Madalusi Saraswathi Tiruvenkatacharya of Nidamangalam, author of "Sringara Manjari" and translator in Telugu of the "Abhinaya Darpana" of Nandikeswara (It was this text in Telugu which was translated into English as "The Mirror of Gesture", by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswami, and Duggirala, a Telugu scholar). Besides she also learnt several pieces from her mother, a Devadasi.

Gowri became an accomplished artiste and began giving dance recitals in her fourteenth year; for many years she was attached to the Kapaleeswarar temple. Gowri Amma learnt select Jawalis and tillanas from Sri Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar also. In turn the great master also learnt the spicy jawalis of Subbarayar and some Kshetrappa padas from her.

For some years she was teaching abhinaya to pupils at Kalakshetra and was responsible for bringing into vogue the famous Useni Svarajati and padas of Kshetrappa and jawalis of Dharmapuri Subbarayar. She also took special classes at the "Karnataka Sangeetha Academy", the hospitable home of the famed patron of music and dance, Mr. Alar Chokkaiah Chettiar, (former zamindar of Devakottah and present trustee of Sri Ramanathaswami Devasthanam, Rameswaram). Here she trained a young sapling Pushpa of

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Mylapore Gowri Amma-A Great Dancer & Teacher

By

NATYA KALABHUSHANAM NIRMALA RAMACHANDRAN*

To those of us who knew Mylapore Gowri Amma closely, she was not just a Devadasi dancer who was attached to the Mylapore Kapaleeswarar Temple or a dance teacher of Abhinaya of yester years. To us who remember her with nostalgia, Gowri Amma was an institution by herself—so affable and human, yet had to toil for her living to feed her dear grand-daughters.



It was the time when dancing had been abolished from the temples. It was the saddest part, for dancing was a very important aspect of our temple

worship. This resulted in Gowri Amma becoming unemployed and forced to vacate the house allotted to her by the temple.

My grand-mother who lived in Mylapore knew her from her dancing days. She also knew her as a good orthodox pious woman—so thought her fit to come home and teach her daughters (my mother and aunt) Carnatic Music! (in those days of Brahmin orthodoxy and ideas)! She

Nirmala Ramachandran

came to us not as a mere teacher teaching us by the hour, she was part of our household now teaching, now resting and at other times, chatting of her younger days. Gowri Amma had a sound knowledge of music having been taught by great musicians of the past like Madurai Ponnusamy Pillai known for his knowledge of Padams and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. It is a well-known fact that she taught many

*Natya Kala Bhushanam Smt. Nirmala Ramachandran is one of the outstanding exponents of Bharatha Natyam today.

Having had the best of training under great masters of the Pandanallur School - Chokkalingam Pillai and Swaminatha Pillai—and specialised training in Abhinaya from the veteran Gowri Ammal and her association with Balasaraswathi in Sarabhendra Bhoopalakuravanji, Nirmala has that rare and inimitable blend of the chiselled and forceful rhythm of the Pandanallur school and the delicate abhinaya of Bala School. A music graduate of the Madras University, she has had sound training in Karnatic Music under Palghat K. V. Narayanaswamy and in Pada singing from the great Jayamma and Muktha of Vina Dhanammal school. She was the recipient of the Government of India cultural scholarship between 1955 to 57. (Continued on Page 42)

eminent dancers like Smt. Rukmini Devi and Balasaraswathi.

My own association with Gowri Amma began when I was hardly eight. Her niece Pichai teacher who was my class teacher in National Girls High School, Mylapore (now Lady Sivaswami Iyer School) somehow thought me fit to be taken to her aunt and teach me a whole series of dance numbers to be presented as Baby Nirmala for a school fund raising programme!

Gowri Amma had the creative ability and flexible approach to give a lighter vein to even a serious padam when it came to teaching young students in their teens. I remember with delight how I enjoyed doing Abhinaya for the song in Atana "Chinnanaj chirukki enru ennai yeikka vandeero—chellathu pom pomaih". 'Chinnanaj Chirukki' that I was, I revelled dancing the lines 'Ennaiyum Avalaippol ennalagumo swami' as Gowri Amma had taught me to do Kalpana Abhinaya for the words 'Avalaippol' as that fat lady, that lady with squint eyes, flat nose, pot-bellied, so on and so forth, to my utter joy and delight. For Gowri Amma, Abhinaya came spontaneously which was remarkable in expressiveness and movement. I used to be fascinated by the fluid ease with which she did her 'Addami' (neck movement). She believed dancing was an offering to the gods and adhered to strict principles of dancing.

By the time I had become a dancer of some merit, having learnt thoroughly from

my revered Guru Pandanallur Sri Chokkalingam Pillai, she had grown old but she continued coming home to teach me Abhinaya at least once or twice a week. Her eyesight had become poor, but she would sit, sing the padams beautifully and do abhinaya for many a padam of Kshetragnar or Subbarama Iyer. Even as she sat and danced, she had the remarkable capacity to give an illusion of movement of the body and gait by the little movements of stomach contractions that she used so effectively. Her voice had a ringing quality and depth and she could keep her audience spellbound by the magic of her subtle, suggestive Abhinaya.

It was indeed tragic that a great artiste like Gowri Amma did not have greater support, recognition and position in our country. Though she was given a Sangeet Natak Academy award and some financial support by the Madras State Sangeetha Nataka Sangham for some years, her last days were spent in poverty and misery. Smt. Rukmini Devi supported her for some years by making her teach Abhinaya to her senior students at Kalakshetra.

With Gowri Amma, a great tradition has been lost to us—a great but subtle Abhinaya Tradition—ever refreshing and at once thought-provoking and uplifting. Of course, there is a greater awakening and appreciation of our arts now but wide knowledge and appreciation of art has taken the place of deeper understanding and finer aesthetic values of this art.

She was sent by the Madras Government as one of the delegates to the First World Tamil Conference held at Kuala Lumpur, where she read a paper on "The Dance of the Ancient Tamils". She has done a survey of the Theatre Forms of South India for the National School of Drama, New Delhi under the able guidance of the Late Prof. V. Raghavan. She has been on several cultural dance tours to Europe and the Far East. The Govt. of India sent her to tour the East European countries - G.D.R., Poland and the U.S.S.R. under the cultural exchange scheme.

During her sojourns in countries outside India she has been a cultural ambassador presenting our art and culture by her lectures, performances and teaching of Bharathanatyam. Now in Madras, her home town, she continues her mission for the promotion of music and dance.

Book-Reviews

Shobhillu Saptasvara—Svaravali : Gitam : Prabandham : Suladi :

— Edited and compiled by Savitri Rajan and Michael Nixon; published by the Editors, 44, Fourth Main Road, Kottur Gardens, Madras 600 085, 1982. Rs. 25—00.

This is a musicological work in which chiefly svaravali-s gītam-s and a few other compositional types taken from old and rare music books in Telugu have been edited and presented. The editors have done a great service to music by bringing to light this wealth of music which had almost gone into oblivion.

In the first part of the book are presented, Sarali, Janṭa, Alamkāra and Āditāla Viṣamabheda Varisai-s, taken from the Prathamaśikṣāprakaraṇam of Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu (1859, 1885, 1908, 1917) written by Vīnā Rāmānujāyā. The second part contains selected gītam-s taken from the following works— Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu, Pallavisvarakalpavalli (1900) of Tiruvotṭriyur Tyāgayyar, Saṅgītānandarātnākaramu (1917) of Tenmaṭam Veṅkaṭanarasimhacārya and Veṅkaṭavaradayya. Along with them a gitam of Paidala Gurmūrtri Śāstri from Gāyakaṭārijatamū of Taccūru Chinna Siṅgarācāryulu, two gitam-s of Tiger Varadācāryar and Sūladi of an unknown composer are also presented. These are given in Sargam notation in Tamil and Roman scripts on facing pages of the book.

In the introduction to the book, the editors give brief accounts of the works from which the songs have been taken. The passages cited from Subbarāma Dīkṣitar's works, which contain instructions to students on the method of practising early lessons, should be beneficial to students

and teachers alike. The section on Gītam-s contains useful remarks on the definition of Gītam and the Dhruva-rūpaka tala. However, the two introductions in English and in Tamil are not identical in content. For instance, the note on Kaivāra prabandham given in the English version of the Introduction, is not seen in the Tamil version. The Tamil introduction (p. iv) mentions that Paidala Gurmūrtri Śāstri's Lakṣaṇa gītam has been taken from Gāyakaṭārijatamū of the Taccūru brothers while the introduction in English (p. 54) gives the source as Gāyakaśiddhāṅjanamū of the same authors.

The editors have provided precise and beautiful English translations for certain Sanskrit verses (dhyāna śloka-s) on tāla-s, though strangely no Tamil translations are given.

The notation has been neatly printed and the lines are well spaced. However, the occasional instance of separating a consonant from its vowel sign and the splitting of conjunct & consonants in Tamil notation could have been avoided. For example on page 22, one finds றி க க ஸு ர ர which should have been றி க க and ஸு ர ர .

in page 26 ப நி த should have been வை தே

ப நி த
வை . தே

Now, turning to the main contents of the book, namely the compositions, the most intriguing feature of the svarāvali-s taken from *Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu* are the sāhitya-s (verbal texts) appended to the svāra passages. All the forms of svarāvali-s jāṭa, dāṭu and alaṁkārams have texts attached to them. It is not clear how old this tradition of incorporating texts for svarāvali-s is, it does not appear to be a healthy one. The contention of the editors (p. xv) that this feature relieves the monotony and enhances the effect of melody, cannot be agreed with. Firstly, one has to understand the place of these svāra exercises in the musical system. The svarāvali-s are first steps in the formal initiation into classical music. It is only when prospective students of music have been exposed to much music (cinema, dance, festival, ritual etc.) and exhibit a liking for, and at least a rudimentary ability to sing, a tune, that they are ready for initiation into classical music. And since in classical music it is the melodic or the tonal structure that is primary, the student is first trained to perceive tones (without the distraction of meaningful syllables) and repeat them. It is essential that only svāra-s expressed as sargam syllables (for identification purposes) be practised. Svarāvali-s, even when appended with meaningful sāhitya, will not make good musical structures or songs, and cannot serve the purpose of inculcating musical taste. Attaching a meaningful text to the sargam line spoils the very purpose of svāra exercises and the attempt is wasteful and can even be harmful. The svarāvali-s are intended only for serious students of music, to whom the exercises will not appear monotonous. Notwithstanding the fact that Vīṇā Rāmānujāyā and even Subbarāma Dīkṣitar have adopted this practice we see that

music teachers by and large have been discriminating in not choosing to include the sāhitya passages.

It must have, however, been a difficult task for the composer to find suitable words for all the svarāli-s. At some places (e.g., p. 12, lines 2, 14, 16, 18) the laghu svāra-s are not matched by laghu syllables of language and vowel extensions have been resorted to, thus going against the spirit of the exercises.

The texts for the sapta-tāla alaṁkāra-s composed by Vijayavaradāyā are very interesting. In the first alaṁkāra in dhruvātāla (p.34), the text includes details of the structure of the tāla. It runs—“laghu-gurudruta marayāga”. The tāla as we know it now has the structure laghu-druta-laghu. The total duration value in both cases is, however, the same, i.e., 14 units (4+8+2 and 4+2+4+4 respectively). But the author Rāmānujāyā himself gives a structure of the Dhruvātāla (in fact for all the tāla-s) before the alaṁkāra notations in *Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu* p. 41 (which the editors have chosen to omit). According to him, the 14 mātrā tāla has 3 aṅga-s with the first aṅga of 6 akṣara duration and the remaining two of 4 akṣara-s each. It is odd that the structure defined by Rāmānujāyā should differ from that given in the verse accepted by him. There is a partial resemblance between the structure as defined by Rāmānujāyā and that found in *Caturdaṇḍiprakāśikā* (ch. II, 87-90). In this work, dhruvātāla of one type consists of 2 laghu-s followed by a laghuśekhara of 6 akṣara duration. It is interesting to see the changes the tāla has undergone in a hundred years. A curious feature of the text in this alaṁkāra is the occurrence of sargam syllables sa, ri, ga, ma attached to quite unidentical svāra syllables.

D P M G M P D P M P D P M G
sa ri ga ma ya ni sa li pe da ni tu la nu

This is a very rare instance, as usually the tendency is to match svāra syllables in sāhitya with the identical svāra-s of the music.

The text accompanying the Jhampatāla alaṁkāra (p.38), describes the tāla structure as made up of anudruta (1), druta (2) and laghu (7), which is different from the definition given by Rāmānujāyā (7-1-2). The former corresponds to a variety of Jhampatāla mentioned in *Caturdaṇḍiprakāśikā* (ch. II, 98-99).

Taking the above observations on the sūlādi tāla-s into account, the question arises whether the Editors are right in giving the notations of alaṁkāra-s according to the modern version of the tāla-s.

In the section containing the Gītam-s too, we observe many interesting details. Five “Lakṣaṇa gīta-s” are presented from *Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu*. However, these do not conform to the usual notion of “Lakṣaṇa gīta”, namely, a gīta containing a text descriptive of the characteristics of the rāga in which it has been set. In these five lakṣaṇa gīta-s, no such descriptions of rāga-s are found but only a number of technical terms like “grāma, mūrchanā, svāra, śruti” have been incorporated. The lone exception is the gīta in Nūtanacandrikā rāga. Even this mentions only the names of the rāga and the tāla in which the gīta is set and contains no other details.

Among the ‘lakṣya gīta-s’ (though no such heading is found in *Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu* proper) presented, the gīta-s in Kurañji and Chayātaraṅgī rāga-s, as mentioned by the editors, are found in *Saṅgītasampradāyapradarśini* of

Subbarāma Dīkṣitar also. The divisions of the section ‘Antari’ in Kurañji rāga gīta are better in the *Saṅgītasampradāyapradarśini* (p. 915). In the version in *Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu*, the Antari begins in the middle of the word— “gopinadhure”.

Antari
N S R S / S N N //
Srimad go // . pi na / . dhu re //

whereas in the other work the Antari commences with the word “Srimad” itself. Obviously a new section cannot begin in the middle of a word.

In the case of Chayātaraṅgīni rāga, the editors have mentioned (in the Appendix) the arohaṇa as “s r g m p n s” (dha omitted) while in the gīta “d n s” appears to be the normal movement taken. “s r g m p d n s” is the arohaṇa mentioned by Subbarāma Dīkṣitar (p. 749).

In the notation of the above gīta, the first two svāra-s “M M” should have been separated from the rest by a vertical line to conform to the Dhruva-rūpaka tāla structure and again, at the end while returning to the commencing words “Pavanatanubhava” the tāla-aṅga separation could have been indicated (as is found in *Saṅgītasampradāyapradarśini* p. 750.)

In the gītam in Jujāvanti rāga (p. 100) too, at the end there is a repetition of the following commencing words “atulita vai/bhau re / sakala gurujana / sevita caraṇā/nvita sūri /”.

During the repetition of the above at the end of the composition, the last word occurs as “nitya sūri”. Perhaps the phrase “nitya sūri” should occur at the earlier place also. The reading in *Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu* also suggests this. The distribution of the sāhitya among the

tāla-avarta-s could have been done differently as it appears from a study of the original work.

In the Vasantabhairavi rāga gītām, the svaraṣ and words in the original work, in some places, read differently from those Presented by the editors.

Among the gītas presented from Pallavisvarakalpavalli, the one in Ārabhi rāga is a "lakṣaṇa gīta" in the commonly understood sense. The gīta-s taken from *Saṅgītānandarātnākaramu* are short and very attractive.

The task the editors have undertaken is a difficult one. Only one who has gone through the source books, especially the

Saṅgītasarvārthasārasaṅgrahamu and in particular the gītams printed in it, will be able to appreciate the tedium of editing them. The absence of signs for tāra and mandra sthāna-s and for the duration of svara-s, and the presence of duple consonants in svara-s (rri, gga, etc.), can be exasperating to any editor.

The present edition of "Shobhillu Saptasvara" could of course be improved upon in some places, but the first step itself is a highly commendable achievement. This reviewer is grateful to the editors for having presented this valuable compilation and hopes they would bring out more such books based on other important works written in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

N. RAMANATHAN

Sri Tyagarajakriti Ramayanam

Compiled by D. Seshadri, M.A., I.A.A.S. (Retd). Published by the Little Flower Company, Madras-17. 1983. Price : Rs. 3.00 Pages 90.

There have been many tones on Saint Tyagaraja's kritis—some mere song-scripts with Raga, Tala particulars, some with notations to boot and a few with valuable commentaries such as Kallori Veerabhadra Sastri's *Tyagaraja Keertanalu Visesa Vivaranamu* in Telugu and E. N. Purushothaman's *Tyagopanishad*, songs in Telugu and transliteration and commentary in English. 'Tyagaraja Charitham' and 'Tyagaraja Ramayanam' have also been pet themes with Harikatha exponents and the ones that have been lingering long in memory are Embar's on the former and Balakrishna Sastri's on the latter. Sastri has also published a Tamil tone named *Tyagopanishad*.

Falling in this series is the latest addition, *Sri Tyagaraja Kriti Ramayanam*, a concise edition in Tamil. Collecting material for a speech on the saint's kritis caused new vistas of approach and understanding, as the author puts it. Some of the kritis compiled in a certain order copiously unfold the epic Ramayana. Published originally in Telugu a couple of years ago, a translation in Tamil has appeared now.

Like his contemporaries, Maharaja Swati Tirunal and Arunachala Kavi, the saint too has encapsuled the essence of the epic in a single kriti, "Vinayamunanu" (Saurashtram). Yet he has composed kritis which give one a "Ramayana Darshan"

and this compilation arranges it neatly in a sequence from Bala Kandam to Yuddha kandam followed by Rama Pattabhishekam. More, the author evaluates the salient features and enunciates the philosophic truths they contain. To cite a few examples :

(1) the burning question whether Rama was a mere mortal of princely order as expounded by Valmiki or a superhuman as described in "Adhyathma Ramayana" and Tulsidas's "Ramcharithmanas", is set right by the saint's Atana kriti "Mum-murthulu Gumigoodi", upholding his Ishta Devata above the Trimurthy.

(2) the superiority of the Padukas over the Padas which wear them is meticulously traced in "Sandehamu Deerpaviya" aptly composed in Ramapriya.

(3) the Saranagathi Thathva (with a queer contrast in the Lord's action) con-

tained in the Kakasura episode, as expounded by Sita to Hanuman, forms the core of the twin Kritis "Eramuni Nammithino" (Vakulabharanam) and "Saranu Saranuchu" (Madhyamavathi).

(4) the magnificence of Ramabhana forms another interesting facet of interpretation.

Got up in a neat 90-page booklet and written in lucid, simple style "Sri Tyagaraja kriti Ramayanam" maintains unflagging interest from start to finish. Files and red tape which have been staple for the author (Seshadri is a retired officer of the IA & AS) cadre, have not made his imagination dry. On the contrary he has emerged fresh with pastures tread anew.

A useful study, of educative value to students of music, especially of the younger generation.

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The Madras Cultural Scenario

At the Seventh Anniversary and music festival of the Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer Golden Jubilee Trust, Vidwan Puducode Krishnamurthy, now working with Kalakshtra and formerly Principal of the Government College of Palghat, was the guest of honour. The festival was given a splendid start by Sri T. T. Vasu, the President of the Music Academy, Madras and scion of a famous family of connoisseurs and patrons of music and dance. Sri Vasu's inaugural speech was rich in content and splendid in delivery. His illustrious father could not have improved upon it. Sri Vasu *inter alia* stressed the immense and diverse contributions by Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer to the upholding of the loftiest traditions in Carnatic music and to the happiness he has given to millions of rasikas.

Smt. Rukmini Devi released a second volume of Maharaja Swathi Tirunal's compositions compiled and edited by Semmangudi with great skill, on the occasion. The first copy was received by Sangitha Kalanidhi D. K. Pattammal.

Sangitha Kalanidhi, T. M. Thiagarajan in Tamil and Sri K. S. Mahadevan in English, complimented Sri Puducode Krishnamurthy on his musical achievements. The latter's reply by way of thanks for the honour done to him was a model of humility and courtesy. He attributed his success in the art to his guru Palghat Rama Bhagavathar and the encouragement given by Sri Semmangudi.

The festival included concerts by Mr. P. Vasanthakumar on the Veena, Smt.

Vegavauhini Vijayaraghavan (vocal) and by Sri Puducode Krishnamurthy himself with top accompaniments. The festival was a great success.

The Semmangudi Trust thus forges ahead in its self-appointed mission of assisting needy and aged artistes with pensions, granting scholarships to the talented young, besides of course organising music festivals and honouring Vidwans, old and not so old. The office-bearers of the Trust deserve high praise for their unobtrusive but substantial work in the cause of music. As in everything else, Dr. Semmangudi is very fortunate in this respect too.

* * *

Two very actively functioning organisations, namely, the Kalamandir Trust and "Sankarabaranam" very successfully organised, at the Mylapore Fine Arts Club from the 5th to the 19th August 1913 a dance festival of inestimable value to artists, junior and senior. For fifteen days the public of Madras was treated to some of the finest exhibition of Bharata Natyam. The first session 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. was for promising talent and the second from 7.15 p.m. to 9 p.m. was for the seniors like Lakshmi Viswanthan, Radha, Sudarani Raghupathy, Krishnaveni Lakshmanan, Nirmala Ramachandran, Usha Narayanan, Malavika Sarukkai, Dhananjayans, Chitra Visveswaran and our Latha Neelakandan of Bombay.

The meritorious services rendered by Sri Raja Rajeswari Bharathanatya Kalamandir (Bombay) to the promotion of

Bharatha Natyam were placed on record at a special function held on 20—8—1983 and presided over by that doyen Sri Vazhuvoor Ramiah Pillai. The occasion was highlighted by a dance by Vani (Mrs. Kamalahasan) and her sister Meera, former students of the Kalamandir.

The Madras Telugu Sangit Academy in association with I.T.C. Limited arranged a felicitation festival of glamorous and fantastic dimensions on the occasion of Dr. Balamurali Krishna's birthday. Sri Obul Reddy, Chairman of MATSA, Dr. Gana Kalaa Kalpavalli Smt. S. Janaki, Mr. & Mrs. Rajwade, Branch Manager of I.T.C. Limited, Mr. S. P. Balasubramanian, Mr. P. B. Srinivas, Sri S. V. Narasimhan, Dr. N. R. Sivaswamy, Commissioner of Income-tax, Madras, besides many other celebrities, played various roles honouring Dr. Murali by referring profusely to his brilliant and varied accomplishments as composer of classical, devotional and light music and as performer and patron of the arts. It was indeed a great show all in all, though marred in places by longish speeches and expressions of sheer flattery undiluted. If sister organisations were

present or invited at all, they were neither seen nor heard. Many happy returns of the day to Dr. Balamurali.

Meticulous planning and giving a big hand to talented young performers have always been a feature of the Sri Krishna Gana Sabha's festival programmes. More than ordinary interest was centred on their "28th Gokulastami Sangeetha Utsavam" because (1) T. N. Seshagopalan was the choice—and a very popular one too—for the "Sangeetha Choodamani" investiture, (2) many scholarly demonstrations were arranged in the mornings and (3) a lot of new talent was on show in the afternoon concerts. The inauguration performed by His Excellency S. L. Khurana, the Governor, and the felicitation of Seshagopalan by Padmasri Lagudi Jayaraman and Sri T. S. Parthasarthy, the milling crowds and the austere musical atmosphere evoked on the occasion conformed to the canons of efficiency and popularity always associated with Sri Yagnaraman and his colleagues on the Sabha.

Congratulations Krishna Gana Sabha.
 Congratulations Sangeetha Choodamani T. N. Seshagopalan—J.O.C.

Cultural Scene in Bombay

by
 Dr. SULOCHANA RAJENDRAN

It came as a welcome shower in the drought-hit cultural field when Sangeetha Kalanidhi M. S. Subbulakshmi resuscitated the parched rasikas with elevating music on the Ganesha Chaturthi day at the Shanmukhananda Hall. And the cause for which she put her musical vision to use? To help thousands to regain their

vision at the Sankara Netralaya, Madras. No wonder she has been hailed an "instrument of great causes" and she helped the Medical Research Foundation, the organisers, to return with "pocket full of collections" running close to three quarters of a million rupees. The benefit performance was inaugurated by the Maharashtra

Governor, His Excellency Air Marshall Latif.

"MSS"

MS's was music not for any analysis but to enjoy and experience. The purity of tone, her tranquil repose and her total involvement with the music spell-bound the packed house that afternoon. In addition to her sedate evocation, she recaptured some of the shimmering embellishments which once adorned her music.

There were familiar fare like "Sabhapathikku" (Abhogi), "Aparadhamula (Lathangi), "Sankaracharyam" (Sankarabharanam) plus the multi-lingual bhajans which were all rendered with a refreshing glow. She gave greater importance to sahitya enunciation; niraval given a major treatment while decorative swaras contained to a necessary minimum. Alapanas evoked the soul of the ragas.

Power and pliancy were predominant in her Kirvani essay in which she sang a soulful "Chandrasekharamasraye" dedicated to the Kanchi Paramacharya. Sankarabharanam evoked poignancy besides rising in structural majesty. Annamacharya's "Bhavayami" (Yamuna Kalyani) was a distilled melody with devotional fervour.

Guruvayur Dorai and Vinayakaram lent inspiring support on Mridangam and Ghatam respectively, while Kandadevi Alagiriswamy accompanied on the violin.

On Subramania Bharati's anniversary the Indian Gramophone Company released an LP record of the poet's songs by MS and a grand function was got up at the Bombay Tamil Sangham, presided over

by the Union Defence Minister Shri R. Venkataraman. The Mayor of Bombay Shri Manohan Singh Bedi received the first disc.

During August, the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha featured "Well Done Vaithee" a drama by a local stage troupe "Kalanilayam", and Emani Sankara Sastri in a veena solo. The vainika who has off-beat style of casting Carnatic Kritis in the orchestral mould but retaining the life-cell gamaka graces intact came into his own in his alapanas of Harikambhoji, Kalyani and Sahana. Besides strumming on the frets and tapping on the kudam, he gave longer kaarvais and deflections too in his alapanas and Thanas. Of course the colour scheme dominated his cutcheri.

Chandrasekharan (Mridangam) and Vaikom Gopalakrishnan (Ghatam) accompanied him with a keen sense of anticipation.

The efforts of the Sabha at putting up a Saxophone cutcheri in September were not fruitful. The limitations of the instrument apart, the artiste, Kumbakonam Rajendran, has to have more training and practice.

In the other city concerts, Mani Krishnaswamy was featured at the Rasika Ranjani Sabha, Ghatkopar and Music Triangle, Santa Cruz. Mridangist T. V. Gopalakrishnan gave a vocal recital at the Music Academy, Bombay and spoke reminiscing his Guru and mentor Chemba Vaidhyanatha Bhagavathar's style and system at the Bhaktha Rasika Ranjani Sabha, Anushaktinagar.

LETTER FROM ERNAKULAM

Purity in sruthi and raga bhava

T. K. Govinda Rao gave a vocal concert recently under the auspices of Rasikapriya at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. He regaled the audience for nearly three hours with his unique style of singing. Purity in sruthi and raga bhava coupled with *Swanubhuti* marked his style.

"Sobillu" in Jaganmohini was followed by "Thelisiramachinthanato" the Kriti in Poornachandrika and Anandabhairavi in which he sang "O Jagadamba" of Syama Sastri. The high light of the recital was "O Rangasayee" of Thyagaraja in Kamboji. A good alapana preceded the kriti which was crowned with scintillating swaraprastharas. In the last phase of the concert, the artiste sang "Pahi Rama" in Yadukulakamboji. Bhairavi, Kanada and Sahana in the Ragamalika slokam were rendered in the best of their respective ragabhavas. The concert ended with an absorbing "Jagadodharana" of Purandara Das.

V. V. Ravi (violin) and Tanjore Ramadas gave good support.

Magic from strings

Under the auspices of Rasikapriya Chandrasekharan accompanied by his daughter Bharati gave a highly enjoyable violin concert at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan recently.

He began the concert with the Ata Thala Varanam "Sarasijanabha", in Kam-

boji which at once created the right tempo for the concert.

After "Mahaganapathim" in Nattai, he played an absorbing Alapana of Bindu Malini in which he presented the song "Enthamuddo" of Thyagaraja. Chandrasekharan handled the raga with effortless ease and charm. The Alapana of Simhendramadhyamam was then taken up by Bharati who presented the raga with elegance. The Mysore Vasudevachariar kriti was rendered with feeling along with sparkling niraval and swarams.

The highlight of the Concert was the Sankarabharanam kriti, "Devi Jagajjani" of Swati Thirunal. The elaboration of the raga reflected fully the essence of the grand raga. The scholarly niraval and the swaraprastharas brought out the artist's high musical acumen and imagination. The whole concert was punctuated by frequent applauses. During the last phase of the concert, Chandrasekharan proved himself a gifted vocal singer too. He sang his own composition "Karmukilvarnane", in Bagasri raga, while playing violin simultaneously. The song was highly appreciated. The concert ended with a sparkling Thillana in Mohanakalyani.

The percussion support by Tanjore Upendran on the mridangam and Mohanram on the ghatam drew appreciative response from the listeners.

Greatness of Thyagaraja kritis

Dr. R. Krishnaswamy, the noted musicologist and President of the Sadguru

Samajam of Madras gave a thrilling talk on "The music, poetry and philosophy of Thyagaraja" under the joint auspices of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Cochin Kendra and Rasikapriya on the 19th June 1983.

He pointed out that every kriti of Thyagaraja had its own music, poetry and philosophy and substantiated his thesis by quoting several popular kritis of Thya-

garaja and explaining their significance. He advised students to approach the music of Thyagaraja with reverence and devotion. Each of the Pancharatna kritis had its own poetry and philosophy apart from its unique musical structure, he said.

Mr. Justice Balagangadaran Nair presided over the function and welcomed the speaker.

News and Notes

The election of Sri T. T. Vasu as the President of the Madras Music Academy has raised hopes that, as heir to a great tradition of patronage and support to the highest standards of Carnatic music, he would supply a new measure of dynamism and direction to the Academy which rescues prestigious institutions from getting stale. The road leading to the Academy, the great Auditorium itself, in fact, every bit of that environ moves all music lovers with nostalgic and inspiring memories of his illustrious father, Sri T. T. K. of revered memory, whom Pandit Nehru regarded as a "comrade" in the formidable tasks of nation building. ("Shanmukha" had reprinted a memorable article by him on the one and only Veena Dhanammal of imperishable memory in its issue of January 1981.)

The Academy has done substantial work in its 56 years. But excessive adherence to established modes of functioning results in stale and sterile conventions being followed. The imagination of a new leader to chart out fresh avenues of activity and revitalise such

monoliths is often needed. Opportunities for diversification and creative development have to be seized. Sri Vasu, we are confident, has the dedicated quality of all true patrons of art and no doubt realises that his privileged position carries an equal weight of obligation to guide the destinies of the Academy to greater fruition. He is young and energetic and as Lord Bacon said, "Young men are fitter to invent; fitter for new projects than settled business. Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon."

In the midst of his busy life as an industrialist, Sri Vasu may remember Jefferson's request to George Washington (when the latter was considering retirement from public life). Jefferson said, "There is sometimes an eminence of character on which society has such peculiar claims as to control the predilection of the individual for a particular walk of happiness and restrain him to that alone arising from the present and future benedictions of mankind."

* * *

A Genius

Master Srinivasan's mandolin playing of Carnatic music has taken the musical public in the South by storm. This stripling of a boy just 12 years old has discovered the mystique to achieve instant popularity. One can hardly believe one's eyes or ears when large spans of broadly flowing melody, an exhilarating movement, see-saw changes of tempo, climactic final sequences of swara prastharas in immaculate tala, cascade from the tender fingers of this genius without a single note off-key. At this young age, Srinivasan has the uncanny instinct to play competently constructed crowd pleasers like the kriti "Nagumomu" (Abheri), "Raghuvamsasutha" (Kadana-kuthoohalam), etc. and also play truly classical and deeply evocative sketches of ragas like Thodi, Mohanam, etc. without deviating from tradition.

Already, he has the "killer instinct", the knack to steal the hearts of listeners and sustain undisguised dominance over the accompanists, both violin and mridangam, however senior in the field they may be. The cherubic smile on his face, the quick darting eyes taking in, at a glance, the audience from the centre of the stage will endear him to the most stony-hearted. He is as much at home in a four Kala Vilamba Kala as in higher speeds and keeps an Argus eye on audience atrophy by playing with ease, serene confidence and altogether a manner keyed for applause.

As of now, he wants excessive amplification in sound production and has yet to comprehend the need for those pauses and silences that come from maturity. In due course, he will himself appreciate the need for lambency and settle down for reposeful music. The public of Bombay will hear this prodigy playing at the Shanmukha-

nanda Hall for the Subramanya Samaj of Tiruchendur in October 1983. No music lover should miss the opportunity of enjoying his great gifts.

* * *

Readers of this journal will recall our Editor's interview with John Higgins (January '83) (in Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A.) in the course of which he stressed (1) the opportunities available in the U.S.A. for both Indian and foreign nationals for exposition of Indian musical culture and (2) the immense service done by the visiting musicians and those resident at Wesleyan University like Messrs. T. Viswa, T. Ranganathan not to speak of himself as the Dean of the Dept. of Culture and Arts.

"Navrathri" has always been celebrated at Wesleyan with éclat; with Carnatic music exposes and this September, the art students of Wesleyan, and of course the music-starved Indians resident in those areas who choose to avail themselves, will have the time of their lives, listening to the best Carnatic music.

The cream of Carnatic music culture will for some weeks be on display in USA and Canada — Messrs Lalgudi Jayaraman and his talented son, G.J.R. Krishnan, Flute Dr. N. Ramani, Viswa himself Mr. & Mrs. K. V. Narayanaswami and T. S. Balakrishna Sastrigal (who though a Harikatha exponent primarily, is a very good musician). Mr. Higgins is too well steeped in our music culture to miss this Heaven-sent opportunity of arranging concerts by these stalwarts at Wesleyan in its sylvan settings.

With Trichy Sankaran of Toronto ever ready to give a helping hand and T. Ranganathan resident mridangist, the musicians will be adequately served in percussion accompaniment too.

Cultural Scene in Karnataka

By

T. B. NARASIMHACHAR, Bangalore.

Bangalore has the distinction of immortalising the memories of two of the stalwart musicians of this Century. One is by way of the, by now widely known, 'Chowdiah Memorial Hall' and the other the establishment of the 'Palghat Mani Iyer Memorial Art Centre'. The latter celebrated its second anniversary with a four-day music festival at the Chowdiah Memorial hall during the last week of May this year. In the wake of the 'Best violinist' of the year award in memory of Chowdiah, Mr. K. K. Murthi has instituted the 'Best mridangist of the year' award in memory of his father late Mr. Puttu Rao a great friend of many past musicians and a keen connoisseur. This year's cash award of Rs. 1000/-, a plaque and a shawl were bestowed on Palghat Raghu by Dr. V. K. Narayana Menon, Chairman of the Central Sangit Natak Academy. Incidentally Dr. V. Doreswami Iyengar was also felicitated on his receiving the 'Padma Bhushan' award on the Republic day.

Dr. Menon's Address

The key-note address for the festival was delivered by Dr. Menon. He explained at length the origin and scope of the terms 'Hindustani' and 'Carnatic' music' and pointed out that the Vijayanagar empire under Krishnadevaraya extended over the vast region, now included in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka from the river Krishna to Kanyakumari in the deep

south. This area was then known as Karnataka Samrajya (empire). Saint Purandhara Dasa was a younger contemporary of the Emperor and the Principal Sishya of Saint Vyasaraaya—the Rajaguru. In fact Dr. Menon's address brought out the historic perspective about Indian music, to allay all misconceptions and eliminate linguistic or provincial chauvinism. In doing so, he referred to the part played by great Composers like Annamacharya, Purandharadasa and the Tanjore Trinity in giving identifiable characteristics to Carnatic music through their compositions. Of course many a speaker including Dr. Menon paid unqualified tributes to the memory of the Mridangist par excellence of the Century—the peerless Palghat Mani Iyer.

Programmes galore

The programme by Dr. Semmangndi Srinivasa Iyer had all his wonted briskness, efficiency and élan associated with this doyen amongst the surviving musicians. The large audience heard with great regret his announcement about his decision to retire from the professional concert field.

Tiruvizha Jayashankar gave an enjoyable Nagaswaram recital. R. K. Sri-kantan, the leading vocalist of this State, maintained his reputation with a well planned concert. S. Y. Krishnaswamy's book 'Memories of a mediocre man' was released on the occasion. M. S. Gopalakrishnan gave one of his usually efficient

and tuneful violin solo recitals. In keeping with the mood of the festival, due emphasis was laid on 'Laya vinyasa' and the students of the Ayyanar college of Music banding together under a banner 'Laya Lahari' led by Anur Ramakrishna, the principal, gave an exciting programme. H. Subrahmanyam, son of late Avudayar-koil Harihara Bhagavathar, gave a lecture demonstration on 'Gettu (Jhallari) vadyam and followed it up by accompanying H.N. Krishna in his vocal recital.

A new venture — Hopeful Trend

A new dimension was given to the cultural activities of this Metropolis of Karnataka by the joint efforts of the Indian Council for Cultural Affairs and the Youth Writers and Artists Guild. The new scheme is titled 'EVERY FRIDAY CULTURAL EVENING PROGRAMME', and envisages a short cultural programme of about 2 hours duration on every Friday evening at the State Youth Centre in the heart of the City. Admission is open to all. Each programme is financially sponsored by an organisation including some Government Departments like the Directorate of Information and Publicity, and so on. All the performing artistes belong to Karnataka. By and large young and upcoming artistes are chosen from the field of Music (Hindustani and Carnataki), Dance (different styles) and other performing art forms. But it must be said that this has not yet touched the average art lover. One sees the same familiar faces at all functions. Almost for the first time in recent years a public function was held to felicitate a senior and popular vidwan Sri A. Subbha Rao on the occasion of his 'SASHTIABDHI POORTHI'. Subba Rao has endeared himself amongst the music lovers here by popularising the

exposition of Kannada devotionals (Devavaranas). He gave a concert on the occasion to reiterate his popularity. Many institutions and individuals joined in felicitating him.

The I. C. C. R. got up a function to bid 'bon voyage' to the members of the percussion ensemble of 'Tala Tarangini' of the Karnataka College of percussion led by mridangam maestro T. A. S. Mani. They returned a few days ago from a three-month tour of the States and Canada where they gave a number of successful percussion programmes with 12 instruments. R. A. Ramamani, wife of T. A. S. Mani, proved very popular as the lead vocalist. It may be recalled that she has already established a reputation for herself in the 'JAZZ YATRA' programmes of fusion music.

Hindusthani Music Festival

It was the turn of the Karnataka Cooperative Film Federation to arrange a three-day non-stop festival of eight concerts by well-known Hindusthani musicians at the Chowdiah Memorial hall. While Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Gangubai Hangal, Ustad Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan, Parveen-Sultana and Pandit Jasraj represented the top rung of the ladder, Pandit Vinayak Torvi, Shamala Bhave and Dr. Rajiv Taranath represented the future contenders for elevation. So far as Hindusthani music is concerned, a concert of 90 minutes to 120 minutes duration may not afford much scope for satisfaction either to the performing artistes or to the audience. There were three and four concerts on 2 days and it proved quite a strain for the organisers as well as the audience.

While it may not have been a financial success it did kindle and sustain enough interest in Hindusthani music, which is more in circulation in North Karnataka than in the erstwhile Mysore state. Each artiste was honoured by either a leading local artiste like Dr. V. Doreswami Iyengar, Honnappa Bhagavathar, B. Jayamma, A. Subba Rao, R. K. Suryanarayana or a public figure like Sri. Ramakrishna Hegde, the Chief Minister, Sri. R. L. Jalappa, Minister or Smt. A. N. Banerji, the Governor's wife, who were invited as chief guest for these concerts. Comparatively speaking, all the concerts proved to be of a high order. For the protagonists of Carnatic music it was a veritable feast of melodic experience, thanks to the superior voice culture of the Hindusthani artistes.

Raghavendraswamy Aradhana.

The month of August saw another series of music festivals, of course on a minor scale, in connection with the celeb-

ration of the Aradhana of Sri Raghavendraswami of Mantralaya. Thanks to the establishment of Brindavanas to the Saint in varying parts of this increasingly sprawling city as has happened in many parts of Tamil Nad also, the Aradhana of the Saint is celebrated in a grand manner, of course with music concerts being the main-stay of these celebrations. Amongst them the temple for the Saint in the Swimming Pool extensinn (a satellite of Malleswaram) is becoming increasingly popular. These festivals are generally limited to local artistes and have helped throw up new performing artistes and encourage them. But I have to conclude my report, however reluctantly, with a regret that while Karnataka has turned out many good violinists, and mridangists, it has not been able to present any outstanding male vocalists to vie for honours with veteran R. K. Srikantan. This may be a bitter pill to swallow but it is the truth, borne out by facts.

Letter to the Editor

"Annamacharya"

Sir,

I like Dr. Manchala Jagannatha Rao's article in the last issue on "Annamacharya". It is refreshing to find an Andhra Vidwan boldly saying that "it is certainly not unreasonable to ask that the compositions of great composers of the past be sung with minimum modifications suited to modern trends, but at the same time without deviating from the traditional structure of the musical composition".

One thing I am not able to understand the Vidwan's statement that "some ragas like Samantham and Nilambari differed by minor shades of swaras and the stronger

one Nilambari survived while Samantham went into oblivion."

I have had occasion to point out earlier that there is nothing in common between the two ragas and they are wide apart. Tyagaraja has one Kriti in Samantham and Dikshitar has two. Annamacharya is said to have used this raga in terms of compositions. Has he not composed in Nilambari at all? I would very much wish persons like Vidwan Jagannatha Rao would demonstrate this point in some forum. The same would apply to Bilahari and Desakshi.

Sri Ramnagar S. PARTHASARATHY
Madras-18.

Sad guru Sri Tyagaraja's 137th Aradhana

Sri R. Ramamurthi Iyer of the sishya parampara and his colleagues on the Sri Thyagabrahma Aradhana Mahotsava Committee, have invited the public to participate in the 137th Aradhana Mahotsava of the saint, commencing with Vedaparayanam etc on Saturday the 21st January 1984, followed by Unchavriithi Bhajana, Athishtana puja etc., on Sunday the 22nd January 1984, the Baghula Panchami Day—and obtain the blessings of Lord Rama.



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